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American attitudes toward British imperialism, 1815–1860

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AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD BRITISH IMPERIALISM,
1815–1860

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Elizabeth Kelly Gray

2002

APPROVAL SHEET


This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

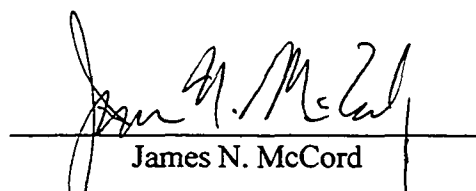
Doctor of Philosophy



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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmothers,
Mae Allen McNeish and May Gray Etlar.

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“American Attitudes toward British Imperialism, 1815–1860”

This dissertation explores American attitudes toward British imperialism between 1815 and 1860 to determine what Americans thought of imperialism before the United States became an imperial power. It addresses the debate of whether the United States's acquisition of an empire in the 1890s was the result of focused determination or was, as many historians have characterized it, an accidental acquisition by a people long opposed to empire. This study also explores the benefits of incorporating American culture and society into the study of American imperialism.

The years between the War of 1812 and the Civil War connect the time when Americans re-established their independence from Great Britain to the eve of the Civil War, which solved the sectional crisis and thus put the nation in a position to pursue overseas expansion unimpeded. This was also a time of great change in the United States. New Protestant denominations were challenging the church's authority. Industrialization was making workplaces more hierarchical and consequently causing greater awareness of class. And a print revolution was bringing many more Americans into the reading public, thus causing the era's readings to represent a much broader range of opinions than those of a generation before.

During the era under review, Americans repeatedly wrote long articles about the British empire, which indicates the great interest that the topic held for them. This study addresses British imperial episodes in Hawaii, China, South Africa, Nicaragua, and India. Quite often, Americans' domestic concerns—whether they involved, for example, specific religious views, attitudes toward war, or thoughts on slavery—strongly influenced their attitudes toward foreign events. Such leverage was facilitated by the often sketchy nature of accounts from abroad, which enabled writers to accept certain accounts while doubting others.

The variety of American experiences partly accounts for the variety of American attitudes toward British imperialism. Many praised the British for spreading Protestant Christianity, a rigorous work ethic, and British governance, and for bringing new populations into international trade as producers and consumers. And they accepted the means to these ends, such as high mortality among natives and British suppression of native insurrections. Often, they accepted native suffering as part of God's plan. Others, meanwhile, lambasted the British for introducing diseases, weapons, and alcohol that decimated native populations, and for reaping profits by exploiting natives. These Americans dismissed the notion that God approved of all that happened.

Almost all Americans agreed that the British imperial system was flawed, but few concluded that imperialism was inherently wrong or unworkable. Although most maintained that the United States did not need to acquire a territorial empire of their own—regarding such expansion as cumbersome and unnecessary—they believed that a commercial American empire could benefit all parties involved. This vision resembles the commercial expansion that the United States had begun to pursue in this era and that would find its greatest realization after the Civil War.

AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD BRITISH IMPERIALISM,
1815-1860

INTRODUCTION

This study explores American attitudes toward British imperialism between 1815 and 1860 to determine what Americans' opinions of imperialism were before the United States became an imperial power, and why they held those beliefs. With such a focus, this study will address the debate of whether the United States's acquisition of an empire later in that century was the result of focused determination or was, as traditionalist historians have characterized it, a temporary departure by a people that long opposed imperialism. It will also help place American empire in a global context by revealing how Great Britain's empire compared with Americans' imperial ideal. In addition, this study will add to the growing body of work that incorporates American culture and society into the study of American empire.

The various definitions of "imperialism" make it crucial that I define the term for the purposes of this study. By "imperialism," I accept the definition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, which equates it with "the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation esp. by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas."¹ Although such a definition would encompass the antebellum United States' contiguous territorial expansion, I am focusing on imperialism in which no general expectation existed that the controlled territory and its inhabitants would eventually

¹ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1999), 582.

be incorporated on an equal basis into the mother country. This project began with my curiosity, several years ago, as to whether Americans' attitudes toward British imperialism changed as a result of the Spanish-American War. Although my early research drew my attention exclusively to the antebellum era, overseas control of subject peoples has remained my special interest.

There is much variety within the category of "overseas control of subject peoples," however, and I selected episodes for this study to represent that variety; they represent different decades, different parts of the world, and different kinds of control, from Great Britain's ultimately unsuccessful attempts to control Hawaii, to commercial imperialism leading to war in China, to informal influence via formal recognition in Nicaragua, to the formal governance of the East India Company in South Africa and India.

Because I am interested in American attitudes toward the power relationships that constitute what we now call imperialism, I am less concerned with contemporary definitions. *Merriam-Webster's* cited 1851 as the dawn of their definition of imperialism; at this point, four of the five episodes that form this study had already occurred.² And in their study of the meaning of *Imperialism*, Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt noted that, until about 1839—more than halfway through the era under review—one of the central features of "imperialism" remained the "massive compactness of one block," a definition inspired by the Chinese and Roman empires rather than the British. In 1839, awareness of the British empire shifted the definition,

² Ibid.

and it came to refer to “a complex and heterogeneous system of colonial links with the mother country.”³ While awareness was growing and definitions were shifting, however, the British were already involved in numerous power relationships. These relationships, rather than the definition of “imperialism” itself, are at the heart of this study.

This dissertation plumbs Americans’ opinions of imperialism before their overseas empire became a reality. Dwelling on another nation’s empire when the United States was, at best, in a stage of “incipient imperialism,”⁴ Americans could envision a future American empire with a more detached and theoretical perspective than they would be afforded in the 1890s. Their comments challenge historians’ reticence to speak frankly of empire. While some rued the potential further spread of imperialism, many—including most American policymakers—optimistically envisioned an American empire that would avoid Great Britain’s mistakes and would benefit all parties involved. More importantly, many of their comments reveal the strong influence of domestic issues on their opinions. As will be shown, many commentators in this era, in writing about episodes in Great Britain’s empire, shed more light on their views of slavery or religion than on imperialism per se. Such a preoccupation indicates the importance of studying American culture and American foreign relations in conjunction. One can take the subject out of America, but one cannot take America out of the subject.

³ Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 80.

⁴ Edward P. Crapol, “Coming to Terms with Empire: The Historiography of Late-Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* (Fall 1992), 592.

This study includes some analysis that does not focus on American attitudes toward British imperialism but nonetheless supports the goal of this dissertation. The connection between British imperialism and the coterminous era of reform that the United States was experiencing went almost wholly unrecognized by contemporaries, but this ignorance is in itself instructive. The boon to northeastern schools, hospitals, and universities that was provided by opium fortunes—which were at least indirectly the result of the East India Company’s efforts in China—is too important to go unaddressed. Also, I have used American attitudes toward British imperialism not as an end in themselves but as a way of determining antebellum Americans’ attitudes toward imperialism in general. For this reason—and toward this end—I have included attitudes toward American imperialism. Although the United States was only making gestures toward imperialism in this era, American missionaries’ hold on Hawaii and the American presence in Nicaragua were sufficient to generate comments back home that reveal attitudes toward imperialism in this era. The efficacy of using the British empire as the lens for this study is suggested by the fact that, as will be shown, American attitudes toward American imperialism in Hawaii followed the patterns of American reactions to British imperialism in Hawaii and elsewhere.

Several historians have encouraged the comparison of American and European empires.⁵ In her 1988 essay “‘The Empire’ Strikes Back,” Emily Rosenberg noted the vast difference between Britons’ and Americans’ approaches to imperialism. While the British worked “to *justify* empire,” Americans tried “to *deny* the existence of

⁵ Ibid., 586.

empire,” she observed, and suggested that a comparative study would be enlightening.⁶ Ann Laura Stoler seconded the suggestion in a December 2001 *Journal of American History* round table on American empire and “intimacies.”⁷ As part of that round table, Robert J. McMahon lamented that earlier calls for studying American and European colonialism comparatively, such as Rosenberg’s, had “gone largely unheeded.”⁸ This dissertation heeds that call, by providing a comparative perspective on empire in which antebellum Americans themselves drew the comparison.

This dissertation also connects the study of antebellum American empire with American culture and society. Attention to culture and society has already invigorated other subfields of international history, including studies of the British empire and the Cold War.⁹ In 1981, Anna Kasten Nelson suggested that historians of American empire expand their study by paying attention to the “relationship between adventurer, entrepreneur, and politician”—and to their economic ties—and by going “beyond conventional diplomatic sources” to do so. Kinley Brauer took this broader approach in 1988 with his study of “The United States and British Expansion, 1815–

⁶ Emily S. Rosenberg, “‘The Empire’ Strikes Back,” *Reviews in American History* (December 1988), 589.

⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” *Journal of American History* (2001), 846–50.

⁸ Robert J. McMahon, “Cultures of Empire,” *J. of Amer. Hist.* (2001), 889.

⁹ For the British empire, examples of this scholarship include Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). For the Cold War, they would include Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books, 1988); and Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

60,” in which he demonstrated that antebellum American merchants, planters, and manufacturers perceived the British as following a “well-conceived imperial strategy” to seize overseas markets and feared that this would hurt their own potential for international trade.¹⁰ In the introduction to 1993’s *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, however, Amy Kaplan noted that most historians continued to deny the existence of American empire, and she partly attributed the perpetuation of the myth to “the absence of empire in the study of American culture.”¹¹ Since then, more works that combine American culture, society, and empire have appeared, including Kristin L. Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* and John Carlos Rowe’s *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II*.¹² The *Journal of American History*’s 2001 round table on “Empires and Intimacies: Lessons from (Post) Colonial Studies” continues this broader approach by including issues such as domestic arrangements and child rearing in the study of American empire.¹³

The years between the War of 1812 and the Civil War—also known as the

¹⁰ Anna Kasten Nelson, “Destiny and Diplomacy, 1840–1865,” in *American Foreign Relations: A Historiographical Review*, eds. Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker (Westport, Conn., 1981), 56–57; Kinley J. Brauer, “The United States and British Imperial Expansion, 1815–60,” *Dip. Hist.* (Winter 1988), 24.

¹¹ Amy Kaplan, “‘Left Alone with America’: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” in Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham, N. C., 1993), 11.

¹² Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) and Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ “Empires and Intimacies: Lessons from (Post) Colonial Studies,” *J. of Amer. Hist.* (2001), 829–97.

Middle Period—have been selected as the time span of this study, and the era has worked out well in several ways. It is a crucial era, connecting the time when Americans re-established their independence from Great Britain to the eve of the Civil War, which solved the sectional crisis and thus put the nation in a position to pursue overseas empire unimpeded. Attitudes toward overseas imperialism at this time, however, have received little attention. It is also early enough to test a common theory that Americans opposed imperialism for much of the nineteenth century. Although imperialism at this time had its share of American critics, attitudes toward imperialism varied and, to a degree, mirrored domestic concerns. Perhaps most noteworthy is the fact that imperialism—at least in theory—found strong support among policymakers and writers for journals that had influence in Washington. But many other Americans found a voice at this time. This was the era of America's first print revolution, in which improved printing techniques rapidly increased the available numbers of books, magazines, and newspapers. The size of the reading public grew accordingly, as penny publications became available and as the expanded arena allowed a variety of opinions on all subjects—including imperialism—to be heard. Therefore, this era produced a rich array of sources for plumbing American opinions.

The episodes in this study cover each decade of the era under review, and, by including British expansion in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the South Seas, they also cover much of the globe. The episodes were selected to cover the era chronologically, to determine whether American attitudes toward imperialism shifted

over time. They cover different regions to establish whether the race of the colonized people influenced American attitudes and to establish the impact of a region's strategic importance on American reactions. The topics of the six chapters are:

1. The Print Revolution: In this era, the explosion of print culture, especially periodical literature, created a public sphere in which many Americans could express their opinions or find their opinions expressed by others. An understanding of this forum is necessary before turning attention to the ways in which the participants in this forum reacted to five episodes in British imperial history in this era.

2. The Sandwich Islands: The British began to establish a protectorate over the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) in the 1790s. The islands were strategically important to the United States as a stopping place for whaling ships. The distraction of the Napoleonic Wars—and the aggressive work of American missionaries—loosened the Britons' hold on the islands, and as the 1820s closed, they were in American control. Many Americans were less confident than the missionaries of the merit of Western presence in the islands, especially given the drastic death toll that Hawaiians faced in the years after contact.

3. The Opium War: In 1839, the Chinese tried to end opium importation into their country. Such loss of trade would have devastated the British East India Company, whose fortunes depended heavily on the drug's production in India and consumption in China. While Americans in China were inclined to oppose the Chinese, most Americans back home regarded British prosecution of the war as unchristian and ignoble. They also feared that the war might cut off the China market from the West, but British victory gave Americans unprecedented access to the

Celestial Empire.

4. South Africa: The British gained control of the Cape Colony in the late eighteenth century; in the 1830s and 1840s, they had a strong missionary presence there and moved northward to claim and subdue the Natal province. South Africa was not a profitable colony for the British at this time and was strategically of little consequence to Americans. Many Americans regarded the British presence as saving and uplifting a depraved people. Others, however, who lamented the fate of American Indians, feared that South Africans would meet the same fate and were therefore less confident about the benefits of empire.

5. The Mosquito Coast: Discovery of gold in California in the late 1840s led to heavy westward immigration, which sparked renewed interest in isthmian transport across Nicaragua. But American migration was hampered by the British, who controlled a crucial part of the country due to their recognition of the Miskito Indians' sovereignty. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty gave the Britons an added check on American expansion. British presence in Nicaragua produced the most widespread American opposition to British imperialism, because it was here that the British presence threatened American expansion most.

6. The Indian Uprising: In 1857, in response to persistent British threats to Indian culture, the sepoys—soldiers in Great Britain's Indian army—launched a rebellion against their rulers that required a year and a half to suppress. Many Americans believed that the British were indeed guilty of governing India poorly. And while they disagreed as to whether the British had imposed their culture on Indians too much or not enough, they tended to believe that even bad British governance was

the best rule that India had known, and to hope that Great Britain would remain and rule India better.

This is a study of the antebellum era from an early-twenty-first-century perspective, and I want to acknowledge both ends of this chronological span. For this reason, I have used the modern spellings of people and places in my analysis, while of course preserving the contemporary spellings in quotations. This dissertation will therefore refer both to Hottentots and Khoikhoi, Mosquito and Miskito Indians, Cawnpore as well as Kanpur.

Much of my assessment of American attitudes toward British imperialism comes from a study of contemporary journals. Aimed at a variety of audiences, they provide numerous perspectives. While some editors never commented on events beyond the United States' borders, many publications whose subjects ostensibly had nothing to do with commerce or foreign events—from *Godey's Lady's Book* to the *Southern Literary Messenger* to the *Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy*—found room in their pages to comment, repeatedly, on news from the British empire. I have included journals with obvious links to imperialism, such as those focusing on international commerce, foreign events, politics, and missionary work. I have also included other journals from the religious community—aimed collectively at Catholic audiences and members of seven Protestant denominations—because the British empire entailed a Protestant nation governing people who were not Protestant, and usually not Christian. To make up for the literature's bias toward white, middle-class men from the Northeast, I have made sure to select journals focused on women,

members of the working class, Westerners, Southerners, and African Americans. I also looked at journals whose subjects spawned many publications—such as those focusing on medicine and culture—to see whether they commented on imperial episodes. Although they did not do so consistently, such journals will be highlighted in chapters on subjects that they addressed.¹⁴ As each journal is introduced, a parenthetical notation will indicate its years of publication and a footnote will include its place of publication. Such information provides additional context for the journals by noting their popularity (or lack thereof) while also addressing differences among regions.

Imperialism was a potential economic boon, as control of a foreign land and population could provide a nation with new supplies of raw materials, cheap labor, and new customers for Western manufactures. It could also facilitate expansion beyond the colony by providing a stopping place on a long journey, and could provide employment and a new home for a country's surplus population. Journals that addressed international commerce, therefore, were crucial to my survey. Many writers for *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, a well-known journal that began publication in New York in 1839, wrote about Britain's empire and tried to derive lessons from it for the United States. *De Bow's Review*, which debuted in 1846 and was based in New Orleans, became quite a well-known journal that provided an economic and Southern perspective on the empire. I have also included New York's *The Pathfinder*, which

¹⁴ The University Microfilms International collection of nineteenth-century periodicals has been invaluable to my research. In *American Periodicals 1741–1900: An Index to the Microfilm Collections* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1979), editors Jean Hoonstra and Trudy Heath described journals' content and popularity, which was of great assistance as I made my list. Their index is the source for this overview.

focused on commerce and foreign events during its brief run in 1843. Farmers were interested in foreign markets for their crops; consequently, farm journals frequently addressed international events. In addition to Baltimore's *American Farmer*, which debuted in 1819 and was "one of the most successful of the early farm papers,"¹⁵ I have included Richmond's *Southern Planter* (1841–1860), which was one of Virginia's most successful farm papers;¹⁶ Cincinnati's *Western Farmer and Gardener* (1840–1845), and Chicago's *Prairie Farmer* (1841–1860).

Journals that focused on international events were also important additions. I included *World Affairs*—also known as the *Advocate of Peace*—which was published throughout the span of my study by the American Peace Society in Washington, D. C. In the mid-1850s, the *American Geographical Society of New York Bulletin* addressed the international scene. Philadelphia's *Museum of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* reprinted articles from British magazines and was the "leading American eclectic" throughout its run, from 1822 to 1842.¹⁷ New York and Boston's *American Eclectic* printed periodical literature from Europe in the early 1840s, while New York's *Albion*, which first appeared in 1822, and *Littell's Living Age*, which began publication in Boston in 1844, provided a pro-British perspective, the latter reprinting articles from British journals. Although *Littell's* circulation was not large, it did bring foreign literature to the American public.¹⁸

For political publications, I have included New York's *United States*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

Democratic Review, which appeared under various names from 1837 to 1860, and which in its heyday was distinguished by selections from noteworthy contributors and important articles on social questions.¹⁹ The *American Whig Review*, meanwhile, was published in New York between 1845 and 1852.

Writers for missionary journals such as Boston's *Baptist Missionary Magazine* and *Missionary Herald at Home*, both of which spanned the period under review, tended to celebrate the British empire's potential to advance Christianity abroad. The *Baptist Missionary Magazine* was the nation's primary missionary magazine and was, for much of its run, the nation's only Baptist periodical.²⁰ Another publication that tended to support missionaries was the *Christian Spectator*, which between 1819 and 1838 focused on the Presbyterian and Congregational churches and included contributions from prominent New England clergies.²¹ The conservative Presbyterian *Princeton Review*, which was published variously in New York, Philadelphia, and Princeton, New Jersey, was also inclined to support British control, as was the Congregationalist *Boston Recorder*, which appeared throughout the period under review, and *Zion's Herald*, which first appeared in Boston in 1823 and was one of the greatest Methodist weeklies.²² New York's *Church Review*, a leading Protestant Episcopal publication that first appeared in 1848, and Boston's Baptist *Christian Review*, which covered the period under study, criticized the British for not Christianizing their subject peoples. The *Christian Secretary* is also included, an

¹⁹ Ibid., 212–13.

²⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹ Ibid., 188.

²² Ibid., 230.

important Baptist weekly that supported the missionaries' work and appeared from 1822 through 1860.

While some Protestant journals celebrated Britain's potential to spread Christianity, others opposed what they regarded as unchristian aggression for economic gain. Boston's Unitarian *Christian Register*, a leading weekly paper that appeared from 1821 to 1850, sometimes criticized methods of Christianizing. Another Unitarian publication, the *Christian Examiner*, which was published in Boston and New York, opposed British incursions, and has been considered one of the nation's most important religious journals because it gave the Unitarian church a strong voice and published a high caliber of literary criticism and commentary on social and philosophical issues.²³ Philadelphia's Quaker journal the *Friend*—which opposed all wars—and the popular Baptist journal the *Christian Watchman*, which was published in Boston, further broaden the range of Protestant perspectives. I found no Jewish journal published during this era that addressed the issue of imperialism.

Antagonism between Catholics and Protestants was palpable throughout the era under study, and Catholics were among the most ardent opponents of empire, in part because of Great Britain's control of Ireland. To address the Catholic perspective, I have included the *Boston Quarterly Review*, which was published from 1838 to 1842; Cincinnati's *Catholic Telegraph*, which appeared from 1831 to 1846; and *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, which began publication in 1844. Although *Brownson's* often had a combative style and held stances with which many Catholics

²³ Ibid., 54.

disagreed, it became “a strong voice of the Catholic church.”²⁴

When choosing from among several journals in a certain field, I opted for the most popular ones, those that covered the longest span of time—to make my study as consistent as possible—and those that were *not* aimed at the most popular target audience, white, middle-class men in the Northeast. For most of the nineteenth century, New York’s *Godey’s Lady’s Book* was by far the most popular journal among middle-class women, though I have also included the less worldly *Ladies’ Repository*, also out of New York, which was founded by a Methodist minister in 1841. The *Lowell Offering*, whose authors were women working at the mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, provided glimpses into the lives and minds of working-class women from 1840 to 1845 and was the most prominent journal in the region that was written by factory workers.²⁵ The *Working Man’s Advocate*, a New York working-class newspaper, provided more of this perspective. Under various names—including the *Radical*—the *Working Man’s Advocate*, an important working-class journal, ran from 1841 to 1848. Horace Greeley’s *American Laborer*, a pro-tariff journal that had a brief run in the early 1840s, also provided a working-class perspective. The controversial *Free Enquirer* provided socialist commentary on imperialism from 1825 to 1835. To balance out the Northeast, Southern selections include Richmond’s *Southern Literary Messenger*, which began in 1834, and two journals published in New Orleans: the influential *Southern Quarterly Review* (1842–1857) and the aforementioned *De Bow’s Review*. To represent the West, I have the *Western Farmer*

²⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁵ Ibid., 126.

and *Gardener* and *Catholic Telegraph*, both out of Cincinnati, and Chicago's *Prairie Farmer*, as well as Louisville, Kentucky's *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery*.

Journals devoted to African American issues focused primarily on the abolition of slavery and colonization in Africa. Because many people compared slavery with imperialism, arguments on either side of the slavery issue were of special interest. The premiere abolitionist journal and a publication of "immense historical importance," the *Liberator*, out of Boston, first appeared in 1831.²⁶ I also included the *National Era*, another famous abolitionist publication that began publication in Washington, D. C., in 1847, and Boston and New York's the *Independent*, which debuted in 1848. Proslavery publications included the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *De Bow's Review*. The *African Repository*, which advocated resettling slaves in Africa, was published in Washington, D. C., from 1825 throughout the era under review.

In some fields that might appear at best remotely connected to foreign policy, such as medicine, science, law, and banking, journals provided some unexpected treasure troves. Medical journals that addressed overseas issues included the *American Journal of Pharmacy*—a highly regarded publication that was, for a long time, the nation's only pharmacy journal—and the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, whose contributors included renowned physicians and professors.²⁷ Both these publications debuted in Philadelphia in the 1820s. I have also included the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, which was published until 1851; and

²⁶ Ibid., 118.

²⁷ Ibid., 14, 13.

Louisville's *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, which was published from 1840 to 1855. Also included is the *American Journal of Science*, which strongly influenced American scientific thought throughout the period under review and has been regarded as the era's "greatest journal of general science."²⁸ Another professional journal included in the study is Boston's *American Jurist and Law Magazine*, which appeared from 1840 to 1843 and was likely the era's most important legal journal.²⁹ The *Bankers' Magazine* was a highly regarded, "leading banking periodical" from its debut, in Baltimore in 1846.³⁰ Boston's *North American Review* and Richmond's *Southern Literary Messenger* focused on culture throughout the period under review. Other literary journals included the *American Quarterly Review*, which was published from 1827 to 1837; *Graham's Illustrated Magazine*, a Philadelphia publication which ran until 1858 and whose contributors included some of the era's most renowned writers;³¹ *Putnum's Magazine*, based in New York, which also published the writings of renowned (if often anonymous) contributors from 1853 to 1857; New York's *Knickerbocker*, which first appeared in 1833; and the aforementioned *Southern Quarterly Review*.

Some journals are featured prominently in certain chapters and fall silent in others. Medical journals, for example, were of great use with my study of the Opium War, because of opium's prominence as a medicine and also because of medical missionaries who were in China. But they are less prominent in other chapters. The

²⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁹ Ibid., 15.

³⁰ Ibid., 37.

³¹ Ibid., 95.

Liberator's ambivalence toward both British expansion in South Africa and the Indian Uprising of 1857–1858 makes that publication a valuable addition to those chapters, whereas elsewhere it may be less revealing.

CHAPTER I

THE PRINT REVOLUTION, 1815–1860

Historians have long maintained that Americans opposed imperialism until 1898, when victory in the Spanish-American War made the United States an imperial power. Yet American policymakers supported imperialism long before then and consistently believed that the United States had a special mission in the world. Much of the American public also supported imperialism long before the 1890s. The print revolution in antebellum America created a public sphere in which an unprecedented number of Americans could express opinions, and imperialism was a frequent topic. While some Americans criticized the negative effects of imperial control on subject populations, imperialism had more supporters than detractors, and overt condemnation of imperialism was rare.

Domestic issues often strongly influenced Americans' attitudes toward British imperialism. The period between 1815 and 1860 was a time of great change in the United States, and Americans often projected debates on topics such as religion, slavery, and war onto events in the British empire. Such projection was facilitated by the fact that imperial episodes were conducive to multiple interpretations; accounts came from great distances and were rarely reported by eyewitnesses, and accounts of the same event sometimes varied greatly. Such questionable reportage enabled American readers and commentators to believe what they chose to believe and to discredit the rest. There is a hazard in generalizing about Americans' reactions to

British imperialism beyond this; three prominent abolitionists, for example, had three very different takes on the Indian Uprising of 1857, which suggests that a completely accurate appraisal of American attitudes toward British imperialism would require a person-by-person evaluation. But other trends do suggest themselves. Writers for influential journals that dealt with economics and politics—that is, journals that shared policymakers’ concerns—were more inclined than others to share policymakers’ sense of an American mission, as well as to support Anglo-Saxon imperialism. Writers who were concerned with working-class issues looked less favorably on imperialism than those who did not identify themselves with such concerns. And a study of periodical literature supports Michael Hunt’s assertion that Americans’ beliefs regarding race, nationalism, evangelical religion, and regionalism often dissuaded them from supporting America’s foreign policy ideology.

In his 1992 historiographic essay “Coming to Terms with Empire,” Edward P. Crapol noted historians’ persistent reluctance to use the word “imperialism” to describe American expansion, as well as historians’ tendency to characterize American imperialism in the 1890s as unintentional, rather than its being the result of willful ambition.¹ In *America’s Colonial Experiment* in 1950, Julius Pratt described American businessmen’s interest in overseas expansion in 1898 as the result of “a sudden conversion.”² American victory in the Philippines “turned American eyes to

¹ Crapol, “Coming to Terms with Empire,” 584–85, 587–89.

² Julius W. Pratt, *America’s Colonial Experiment: How the United States Gained, Governed, and In Part Gave Away a Colonial Empire* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964; orig. pub. 1950), 60.

the Pacific as never before," he explained, and came "when American business for the first time" felt the need for a foothold in the Pacific, due to the partitioning of China. Pratt attributed Congress's refusal to support overseas expansion earlier in the century to "simple popular apathy toward overseas adventures." The switch to support, he wrote, represented "a radical change in national thought and feeling."³

Other historians explained away the acquisition of overseas territories in the 1890s as a "momentary fall from grace."⁴ In 1963's *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*, Frederick Merk insisted that a sense of mission was a "truer expression of the national spirit" than 1890s imperialism, which he dismissed as a "[trap] into which the nation was led ... and from which it extricated itself as well as it could afterward."⁵ Hugh DeSantis has suggested that American historians dismiss the United States's foray into imperialism as a temporary lapse because imperialism contradicts values upon which Americans pride themselves. Traditionalist historians believed that the United States, as "the beacon of liberal-democratic progress," could not truly be home to a pro-imperial people, and progressive historians characterized American acquisition of an empire in the 1890s as the victory of evil "interests" over the "people."⁶ Either way, empire was negative because it was antidemocratic.

The notion that Americans opposed imperialism before 1898 has persisted. Amy Kaplan noted in 1993 that Richard Chase, in *The American Novel and Its*

³ Ibid., 2, 74, 60, 9–10, 12.

⁴ Hugh DeSantis, "The Imperialist Impulse and American Innocence, 1865–1900," in *American Foreign Relations: A Historiographical Review*, eds. Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 65.

⁵ Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 261.

⁶ DeSantis, 65.

Tradition (1957), “draws on an enduring assumption that the American struggle for independence from British colonialism makes U.S. culture inherently anti-imperialist.”⁷ In his study of American opinions toward British imperial expansion in this era, Kinley Brauer attributed the United States’ lack of a formal empire partly to “a deep-seated ideological bias against traditional colonialism.”⁸ And in 1995, Anders Stephanson stated that the United States’s acquisitions from the Spanish-American War “looked remarkably like European colonialism or imperialism, which was not an idea easily digested in a former colony.”⁹

Other historians, meanwhile, consider it absurd that Americans deny that they have an empire. “In the United States it is almost a heresy to describe the nation as an empire,” Richard W. Van Alstyne observed in 1960’s *The Rising American Empire*.¹⁰ The author noted that America’s founders had been comfortable with the appellation—Van Alstyne drew the title of his book from George Washington himself. But references to empire fell out of fashion after the Civil War, an ironic change given that “the consolidation of national power that followed that war meant that it was more than ever an actuality.”¹¹ Opposition to the spoils of 1898 and Theodore Roosevelt’s “big stick” policies turned the era’s imperial efforts into a “sickness” from which the United States “recovered.” To save Americans from

⁷ Amy Kaplan, “Left Alone with America,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Kaplan and Donald Pease (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 12.

⁸ Kinley J. Brauer, “The United States and British Imperial Expansion, 1815–60,” *Dip. Hist.* (Winter 1988), 34.

⁹ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 90.

¹⁰ R. W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6, 1, 6.

further contagion, Van Alstyne continued, historians insisted that “imperialism” referred only to overseas, rather than continental, expansion. But he acknowledged that, in the nineteenth century, “American expansion, like British, was global.”¹²

Yet Van Alstyne’s assertions have not been absorbed, a fact that has been noticed both in Great Britain and America. In 1970, British author, filmmaker, and antiwar activist Felix Greene observed that, although the United States “provides the main strength and sustaining force of imperialism everywhere,” “a surprising number of Americans still cling to the notion that their country is *the* anti-imperialist country, the nation which was *born* fighting imperialism, which (with a few lamentable lapses) has always stood for the weak against the strong.”¹³ “The late twentieth century finds Americans unaware that they live in the midst of the greatest empire in history,” Walter Russell Mead observed in 1987. He attributed this myopia to the fact that “the idea of empire has become unfashionable” and to Americans’ inability to reconcile imperial images of “conquest, exploitation, and days gone by” with perceptions of their nation and its values.¹⁴ Amy Kaplan has noted that notions of the United States as anti-imperial appeared in rhetoric of both the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War.¹⁵ And in 2001, British historian David Cannadine noted that the United States, which “was conceived and created on the basis of hostility to empire, ... still thinks of itself as on the side of anti-colonialism; yet it is now the one authentic western empire

¹² Ibid., 6–7, 100, 124–26.

¹³ Felix Greene, *The Enemy: What Every American Should Know About Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1970), xi, 100.

¹⁴ Walter Russell Mead, *Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 3, 4.

¹⁵ Kaplan, 12–13.

remaining.”¹⁶

While the debate persists as to whether the United States was an imperial power, historians have shown that nineteenth-century American policymakers supported their nation’s expansion. Edward Crapol and Michael Hunt have both described policymakers’ sense of national mission, which superceded regional differences. Crapol has noted that President John Tyler put “national above sectional interests.” Rather than privileging Southern concerns, such as states’ rights, the aristocratic plantation owner envisioned the United States moving “to the forefront of nations in the contest for global stature” and was guided by his sense of the nation’s ““common destiny.””¹⁷ In policymakers’ public rhetoric, Hunt identified a persistent ideology whose tenets included a belief in national greatness, the existence of a racial hierarchy, and skepticism of revolutions other than America’s own.¹⁸ This dissertation found similar support among policymakers for the ideology Hunt identified. Throughout this period, policymakers consistently expanded protection of Americans, their trade, and their trade routes in Asia, the Pacific, Central America, and elsewhere.

Nineteenth-century American policymakers also tended to support imperialism, in theory if not always in practice. Although many Americans had misgivings about the British suppression of the Indian Uprising, American Minister to

¹⁶ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2001), xxi.

¹⁷ Edward P. Crapol, “John Tyler and the Pursuit of National Destiny,” *J. of the Early Republic* (Fall 1997), 477, 481, 474.

¹⁸ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 17, 18.

England George Dallas deemed the British East India Company “extraordinary,” American Consul to Calcutta Charles Huffnagle felt that “India must be reconquered ... & ... held by a large European force,” and President James Buchanan assured Lord Clarendon that Americans hoped and expected that the British would have “success in putting down” the uprising.¹⁹

Writers for journals that focused on trade and politics—that is, whose interests coincided with those of policymakers—also tended to support the notion of an Anglo-Saxon mission. Writers for *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* and the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* believed that Hawaiians had benefited from the Westerners’ influence. *Hunt’s* editors maintained that even the introduction of arms had benefited the population, and although one writer for the publication acknowledged that “no people have ever been more abused” than the Hawaiians, he accepted their fate as an inevitable part of the civilizing process.²⁰ Although writers for *Hunt’s* criticized the British for prosecuting the Opium War, they described British missteps as an example of how not to run an empire, rather than suggesting that imperialism was inherently flawed, and writers for the publication lamented the end of the East India Company.²¹ Both *Hunt’s* and the *Democratic Review* accepted racist justifications for American control in Nicaragua, and both these publications and the Whig organ *American Review* published writings by Ephraim George Squier,

¹⁹ Susan Dallas, ed. *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas, While United States Minister to Russia 1837 to 1839, and to England 1856 to 1861* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892), 238; Huffnagle to Marcy, June 29, 1857; Huffnagle to Lewis Cass, Washington, D. C., Dec. 28, 1857, Papers of the Consuls, National Archives; and *The Works of James Buchanan*, ed. John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia and London, 1910), v. 10, 123.

²⁰ “The Book Trade,” *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* (May 1843), 488.

²¹ “End of the British East India Company,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (September 1858), 394.

who, as will be shown below, worked tirelessly to challenge British control of Nicaragua, to secure American control there.

Attention to policymakers and those who shared their interests is instructive, as it plumbs the prevailing ideology of the time. But one cannot then conclude that all Americans believed in the prevailing ideology. Hunt acknowledged that policymakers' beliefs were neater than the national perspective. Societies are "complex in structure and function and ... are difficult to capture in sweeping, 'scientific' generalizations," he warned. Therefore, "we are justified in looking with skepticism on laws that neatly define the relations between group interests and group beliefs."²² Hunt also acknowledged that policymakers were primarily "white males possessed of at least a modicum of wealth from birth," who acted in accord with a view of the world that was not entirely representative of the society they served.²³ Hunt based his study on public rhetoric and noted that such texts, in order to be effective, had to "draw on values and concerns widely shared and easily understood by its audience."²⁴ For this reason, one could conclude that the ideology he found resonated with at least a portion of the American public.

But it did not represent all of American society. Writers for working-class and socialist publications, for example, were more reliably opposed to imperialism. Rather than praising missionaries for educating Hawaiians, a writer for the socialist *Free Enquirer* noted that the missionaries' strict schedule could lead to famine, by

²² Hunt, 12.

²³ Ibid., 12, 13.

²⁴ Ibid., 15.

throwing off native agriculture schedules.²⁵ Writers for the *Free Enquirer* also accused the missionaries of teaching religion in a way that terrified Hawaiians and dubbed the ministers “a hypocritical horde of saintly marauders.”²⁶ And while writers who supported imperialism often appealed to Providence, writers for the *Free Enquirer* refused to ascribe Anglo-Saxon victories to the will of God. Writers for the social reform journal the *Harbinger*, meanwhile, predicted that misplaced priorities would destroy the British empire, because the British government put profit ahead of workers.²⁷

The expression of such varied views was made possible partly by a contemporaneous revolution in print. The antebellum years saw books, newspapers, and magazines find an audience beyond the gentlemen and clergymen who had been its primary patrons. The print revolution brought more people into the reading public than ever before, but it also ushered in the publication of periodicals expressing different points of view, thus highlighting differences within the mass readership.

The print explosion was the result of sophisticated technology, including steam-power printing and papermaking machines. The number of newspapers in America more than quadrupled between 1790 and 1810, facilitating the expression of a variety of opinions and, in some cases, “crystalliz[ing] for common people impulses they may not have had vocabularies to express.” Subscribers to religious publications,

²⁵ “American Missionaries in the Sandwich Islands,” *Free Enquirer* (March 23, 1833), 174.

²⁶ Ibid.; R.D.O., “Church and State in the Sandwich Islands,” *Free Enq.* (June 5, 1830), 249; and “Missionary Abominations,” *Free Enq.* (Nov. 17, 1833), 32.

²⁷ “Tendencies of Modern Civilization,” *Harbinger* (June 28, 1845), 33.

numbering perhaps five thousand in 1800, reached about four hundred thousand by 1830.²⁸ While selling five thousand or six thousand copies made a novel a best-seller in the 1820s, it had to sell ten times that amount in the 1850s to get such a ranking. Frank Luther Mott has estimated that there were fewer than a hundred magazines in 1825, and “about six hundred in 1850.”²⁹

The information revolution’s effect was paradoxical. In one respect, it seemed to provide a way to unite the country. While the reading public in earlier generations consisted largely of clergymen and gentlemen, this era made publications accessible to many more people; a workingman who could not buy a book for a dollar could at least buy a newspaper for a penny. This era also saw publishing centers spring up outside the large Northeastern cities. Between 1815 and 1835, magazines debuted in cities including Cincinnati, Richmond, and Princeton, New Jersey. “The printed word became the primary avenue of national enculturation” in this era, according to Ronald Zboray. “Type was well suited to the work of constructing a national identity” in ways that speeches were not, because texts were portable and unchanging, and thus they facilitated “a common reading experience.”³⁰

But rather than papering over America’s diversity by providing a common reading experience—and hence a common outlook—the print revolution can be seen as a dye that was spilled over the country and thereby brought differences into clearer

²⁸ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 126, 144, 26–27, 142.

²⁹ Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741–1850*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 341–42.

³⁰ Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 55–56, xvi.

resolution. As Zboray observes, “the reading ‘market’ consisted of several local ‘publics.’” While the white literacy rate was high, the rate among African Americans was quite low. Some people had more time for reading than others, and wealthy people could lengthen their days by purchasing artificial light. Distribution of literature often followed the railroads, which gave Northeasterners a much wider selection than their Western and Southern counterparts enjoyed, and distribution to the backcountry depended on the weather.³¹ A town’s literacy rate correlated to its involvement in the market economy. Social conservatism and low population density were largely responsible for the South having the nation’s lowest literacy rates. Western literacy rates were also low, because many new arrivals to the region had lacked opportunities for education or financial advancement in the South and were seeking a better life. Literacy rates were highest in the Northeast, with New Englanders being much more literate than their Mid-Atlantic counterparts.³²

The print revolution revealed different attitudes on a variety of subjects. Readers were far from passive; peddlers were sometimes stuck with books that would have sold elsewhere in the country but were unpopular in their markets. Zboray has suggested that the history of antebellum reading “may well turn out to be the history of misreading,” as publishers repeatedly fell short in their attempts to provide literature that would find the largest audiences. Books and periodicals enabled readers to see “their own experiences writ large,” and if “one particular book or article did not support the personal vision,” Zboray observed, “publishers made sure thousands of

³¹ Ibid., 53, 14, 12, 15, 24.

³² Ibid., 196–200.

other candidates existed for sampling.” The print revolution in fiction split the Northeast along lines of “sex, class, and religion.”³³ Periodicals reflected the “fragmentation and competition” among Christian denominations.³⁴ Isabelle Lehuu has observed a “transgressive quality” in the era’s literature, as print culture sometimes parodied the stricter era that preceded it.³⁵ There were competing regional interests; in the 1850s, for example, *Harper’s* stance on slavery gave the periodical a chilly reception in the South.³⁶ Quite literally, Americans were not on the same page.

But it was the print revolution’s open and unregulated nature that enabled it to help create what social and political thinker Jürgen Habermas has described as the “public sphere.” Habermas defined the public sphere as “a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed,” to which all citizens have access and in which they may give their opinions freely. The sphere “mediat[es] between state and society.”³⁷ Unlike “mere opinions” which persist unchanged, public opinion requires a public that “engages in rational discussion” and whose discussions are “institutionally protected” and have the theme of “the exercise of political authority.” Public opinion, Habermas notes, did not exist until the eighteenth century. He cites the press as instrumental in constructing the public sphere, expanding it beyond the bourgeoisie, and causing the public to lose its cohesion.³⁸

³³ Ibid., 52, 192, 189, 15.

³⁴ Hatch, 126.

³⁵ Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 3.

³⁶ Zboray, 64.

³⁷ Jürgen Habermas *on Society and Politics: A Reader*, ed. Steven Seidman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 231.

³⁸ Ibid., 232, 233–35.

The periodical literature of this era provided a forum for Habermas's public sphere. In this forum, all participants could express their opinions and try to achieve consensus. And this cacophony aptly represented the era's clashing views. Frank Luther Mott considered journals to provide the best snapshot of an era, because they include "an invaluable contemporaneous history of their times" with more skill and order than do newspapers, and they cover a greater breadth of topics than do books. He also characterized them as a "democratic literature" because they were "subject to the referendum and recall of an annual subscription campaign."³⁹ In this realm—as will be shown—imperialism had more supporters than critics, and even those who were most critical of the way in which the British empire governed were chary to suggest that an empire could not benefit all who were party to it.

This was also a time of great flux in American society, which is significant because Americans' domestic concerns strongly influenced their reactions to international news. Several forces challenged social cohesion in America between the War of 1812 and the Civil War. In the words of Nathan Hatch, "the cement of an ordered society seemed to be dissolving."⁴⁰ Much of this dissolution was the result of increased mobility; the West became more important in this era—as signified by the election of Andrew Jackson and the building of the Erie Canal and the B & O Railroad—and many people moved into the backcountry.⁴¹ People were also moving

³⁹ Mott, 3, 4, 2.

⁴⁰ Hatch, 6.

⁴¹ Mott, 340; Hatch, 6.

to cities; there was “remarkable expansion in manufactures, finance, and investment,” and the market revolution beckoned many people away from their “traditional ties of place and family.”⁴² American society moved away from Thomas Jefferson’s wish for an agrarian republic,⁴³ and class differences became pronounced as workplaces became more hierarchical.

This era also saw strong challenges to authority. Nathan Hatch has suggested that “it became anachronistic to speak of dissent in America” at this time, because dissent suggested that “a commonly recognized center” existed against which emerging groups had to define themselves.⁴⁴ Increasingly, people looked “inward for authority and authenticity,” and if “experience contradicted authority, chances are the latter would be questioned.”⁴⁵ Revolutions in both religion and print shattered “the wall between gentleman and common” folk and challenged the gentlemen’s authority.⁴⁶

And varied experiences led to varied opinions. Drinking could provide cohesion among farm workers but was anathema in mills with fast-running machines. Divergent perspectives created an “ongoing crisis of separation” that led to “loneliness, frustration, and forebodings of incipient chaos,” and Americans became “almost obsessed with the experience of loss.”⁴⁷

American Christianity became fractured in this era. Immigration swelled the

⁴² Mott, 340; Hatch, 85.

⁴³ Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 232.

⁴⁴ Hatch, 6.

⁴⁵ Zboray, 188.

⁴⁶ Hatch, 85.

⁴⁷ Zboray, 188, 194.

American Catholic population,⁴⁸ and anti-Catholic sentiment was strong. Within Protestantism, Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher lamented the growing popularity of Unitarianism; it and Universalism stressed the potential of salvation for all, the inherent goodness of humankind, and the importance of listening to one's conscience over literal interpretations. These values strongly clashed with the Presbyterians' Calvinist interpretation, in which salvation was predestined and humankind was depraved. Baptists, meanwhile, emphasized the authority of the Bible and the innate depravity of humankind but also believed that universal redemption was possible and that all people were equal before God. Methodist circuit riders offered salvation to all. Baptists' and Methodists' messages found an especially willing audience in the West, as they brought a sense of community to isolated people.⁴⁹ And several denominations experienced schisms within their ranks.⁵⁰

Camp meetings that emphasized religious ecstasy over doctrinal interpretations provided community for some, but they also challenged ecclesiastical authority and widened the differences within Protestant Christianity. Baptists and Methodists were at the forefront of a "populist challenge" to the Protestant establishment that began in the late eighteenth century. The American Revolution caused respect for authority to erode; consequently, many common people, rather than accepting religious interpretations from formally educated clergy, began supporting new ministers—often illiterate—who encouraged people to follow their "deepest

⁴⁸ Mott, 369.

⁴⁹ George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), vol. 1, 307–10.

⁵⁰ Hatch, 65.

spiritual impulses.” The shift alarmed leaders of more established denominations. Baptists and Methodists attracted large numbers of both whites and African Americans, causing their denominations eventually to constitute two-thirds of the nation’s Protestant membership.⁵¹ And the new ministers’ popularity made their authority difficult to challenge. Nathan Hatch has dubbed this *Democratization of American Christianity* “the real American Revolution.”⁵²

The impact of religious differences and other domestic issues on American attitudes toward British imperialism does not mean that imperialism itself was unimportant to Americans. On the contrary, the frequent long articles on the subject in numerous American publications reveal a deep-seated interest in Great Britain’s network of power and profit. When the British East India Company came to an end in 1858, American expressions of sorrow were sometimes greater than those in Great Britain. Many Americans hoped that the United States would replicate Great Britain’s imperial success while avoiding its errors. Meanwhile, others dwelled on empire’s negative effects on native peoples and lamented that Britain’s control had been so extensive.

The often sketchy nature of news from abroad made it easy for Americans to portray events in the British empire as they chose. Throughout the era under review, Americans learned about episodes in the British empire by reading reports that Europeans wrote about non-Western lands, in some cases without having witnessed

⁵¹ Ibid., 22, 6, 18, 35, 9–10, 3.

⁵² Ibid., 13, 7, 23.

the events. When the *Catholic Telegraph* reprinted an article from the Bengal *Hurkaru* regarding Great Britain's war with Afghanistan in 1842, for example, the writers provided their opinions "As far as we can gather from the disjointed accounts which have yet reached us (for the communication between Cabul and India is still cut off.)."⁵³ Consequently, American commentators had a great deal of leverage as they represented colonial encounters, selecting accounts of a conflict much as an artist selects colors from a palette to present the panorama that he or she envisions. They could accept and reprint an account, as the *Catholic Telegraph* did, or favor one account over others, discredit a report by emphasizing the author's bias or introducing conflicting information, or recall earlier updates to demonstrate a source's inaccuracy or faulty memory.

Because domestic issues so strongly influenced Americans' opinions of imperialism, a study of antebellum American attitudes toward imperialism also provides insight into American society at that time, with its cacophony of change, issues, and debates. Michael Hunt has noted that Americans' attitudes toward foreign policy ideology were influenced by personal concerns including differences among social classes, "racial or ethnic identity, strong nationalist preoccupations, an evangelical faith, and pronounced regional concerns."⁵⁴ These also influenced American attitudes toward British imperialism. In this respect, Hunt's assertion and the findings of this dissertation jibe with Amy Kaplan's observation that "domestic

⁵³ "India and China," *Catholic Telegraph* (April 2, 1842), 109.

⁵⁴ Hunt, 12.

conflicts are not simply contained at home but ... spill over national boundaries to be reenacted, challenged, or transformed,” and that imperialism “is inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses of race, gender, ethnicity, and class at home.”⁵⁵

To ignore these domestic influences—which Richard Brodhead has dubbed “buried referent[s]”—would slight a crucial aspect of Americans’ decision-making process.⁵⁶

The following examples highlight ways in which some of these concerns, specifically American expansion, the peace movement, religious differences, and the abolition of slavery, found their ways into debates about the British empire in this period.

Ethnographer Ephraim George Squier worked tirelessly to convince American readers that Nicaragua’s Miskito Indians were not sovereign and that Americans, not Britons, must rule the region. To achieve this, he wrote about places he never visited—while suggesting that he had—and published many works without using his name, which allowed him to defend his own actions anonymously and even review a book that he had written. His dominance of commentary on Nicaragua gave the image that multiple commentators shared his views, thus causing many other journal editors to accept his interpretation of the situation. Privately, however, Squier admitted that he wrote to ensure that Americans would hold the Miskito Indians in “contempt.”⁵⁷ As will be shown in chapter five, scholars have since dismissed Squier’s assertions that the British had extensive designs on Central America and that Miskito Indians were a dissolute population. But Squier strongly influenced American attitudes

⁵⁵ Kaplan, 16.

⁵⁶ Richard H. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Philip A. Dennis and Michael D. Olien, “Kingship among the Miskito,” *American Ethnologist* (November 1984), 725.

toward the Miskitos, and his comments have remained a documentary landmine; as recently as the 1970s, historians have accepted and quoted his errant assertions.

While Squier impressed upon Americans the urgent need to counteract Great Britain's increasing control in Nicaragua, members of the American Peace Society highlighted the horrors of war to encourage nonviolent resolution of conflicts. In their journal, the *Advocate of Peace*, they traced the American destruction of Greytown, Nicaragua, in 1854 back to its origin and insisted that native violence—which resulted in the American retaliation—only occurred when native peoples had a legitimate grievance.⁵⁸ They took a similar stance with regard to South Africa. After many writers for other publications blamed conflict in the region on Zulus, *Advocate of Peace* writers noted that the Africans only turned violent when Dutch settlers encroached upon their lands.⁵⁹ Writers for the journal also mocked the British for being shocked at the Indian uprising and described British atrocities there, such as killing natives by strapping their bodies to cannons and then setting off the cannons.

Unitarians and Presbyterians represented two extremes within Protestantism at this time; and while Unitarians criticized the spread of Christianity if it were forced upon unwilling populations, Presbyterians tended to regard the Christianizing of the world as crucial and were willing to accept less savory means to accomplish it. One writer for the Unitarian *Christian Examiner* refused to accept any British justifications for the Opium War because he rejected “the promotion of morality by immoral

⁵⁸ “War in Miniature,” *Advocate of Peace* (October 1854), 150.

⁵⁹ “Addresses at the Annual Meeting of the London Peace Society,” *Advocate of Peace* (February 1842), 115.

means,” and another criticized the British for “poisoning a whole people” “for purposes of national aggrandizement.”⁶⁰ When they looked at the waxing British presence in South Africa, the Unitarian writers were similarly pessimistic. One felt certain that British encroachment in the colony would ultimately “prove fatal” to the Africans, as the scenario would likely parallel “the conquests and settlements made in North and South America.”⁶¹ Writers for the Presbyterian *Princeton Review*, however, applauded Great Britain’s potential to spread Christianity and were willing to excuse damage caused by such expansion. One writer insisted that Africans were in the “lowest depths of brutality” before the Westerners arrived,⁶² and another characterized the British struggle in India as “Satan versus God.”⁶³

Writers for the *Catholic Telegraph*, meanwhile, excoriated Protestant missionaries for “destroy[ing] the natural gaiety of the people” in South Africa and insisted that many Protestant accounts of their accomplishments in the colony were “positively false.”⁶⁴ *Catholic Telegraph* writers also noted the huge number of deaths of native Hawaiians as a result of the Western presence, insisted that the British had no acceptable reason for waging the Opium War, and criticized Protestant missionaries’ “prejudice” against the Chinese, which prevented them from providing accurate accounts of Chinese efforts to suppress “the deadly trade in opium.”⁶⁵ When they turned their attention to Catholic missionaries, however, their stance was far less

⁶⁰ W. A., “Great Britain and China,” *Chr. Exam.* (July 1842), 318; “The Opium War, and Its Justice,” *Chr. Exam.* (May 1841), 229.

⁶¹ “The Cape of Good Hope,” *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 390–91, 399.

⁶² “Missionary Labours in Southern Africa,” *Princeton Review* (April 1843), 313.

⁶³ “The Present State of India,” *Prin. Rev.* (July 1858), 452.

⁶⁴ “Africa,” *Cath. Tel.* (Jan. 3, 1839), 31; [Untitled], *Cath. Tel.* (Nov. 30, 1844), 383.

⁶⁵ “Foreign: New by the Taralinta: China,” *Cath. Tel.* (March 7, 1840), 75.

critical.

William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the abolitionist publication the *Liberator*, was deeply interested in the British India Society, whose members worked to ameliorate the Indians' situation.⁶⁶ Garrison regarded their success as "intimately connected with the overthrow of slavery and the slave trade throughout the world"⁶⁷ because he believed that if India—rather than the United States—provided cotton for British manufacturers, the Southern slave system would be dealt "a blow ... from which it can never recover."⁶⁸ Garrison envisioned a movement for "universal emancipation" with the motto "Justice for India! Freedom for the American slave! Prosperity to England! Good will to all mankind!"⁶⁹ Early in the 1857 Indian Uprising he sided with the Indians, critiquing the British for being shocked at the carnage and for lying about Indian atrocities.

The chapters that follow provide a broader array of American responses to episodes within the British empire, by surveying American periodicals of the day. Such a survey reveals more skepticism of expansion and imperialism than policymakers displayed, but not so much to support assertions that antebellum Americans were antiimperial. While many Americans had reservations about imperialism, few condemned it outright. And the variety of their responses indicates the variety of opinions and issues within American culture and society at that time.

⁶⁶ William Lloyd Garrison, *Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Volume III*, ed. Walter M. Merrill (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971–1981), 18.

⁶⁷ *Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Volume II*, 729.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 675, 689.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 675.

CHAPTER II

THE SANDWICH ISLANDS, 1819–1843

Eighteen forty-three saw the publication of James Jackson Jarves's *History of the Hawaiian, or Sandwich Islands*, an unabashed celebration of American missionaries' accomplishments in the archipelago since their arrival twenty-three years earlier. One can almost see the editing staffs of journals nodding as they read their copies of Jarves's *History* and wrote their reviews of it. Before contact, Hawaiians were "the most thoroughly and utterly debased race, perhaps, that ever existed since the creation of the globe," a writer for *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* (1839–1870) concluded after reading Jarves's book.¹ Protestant domestic bliss had been wholly unknown. "Home had no pleasant associations," a writer for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (1837–1859) concurred, "and the natural love of kin had no existence. Cruelty to the aged and infirm" and infanticide were common.² But American missionaries helped the Hawaiians. "American influence has been the chief motive power in the advancement of the Hawaiian islanders," stated a staff member at *Godey's Lady's Book* (1830–1898). "American commerce gave them the arts and productions of civilized life, and American missionaries taught them the religion of Christ. The same influence," the writer continued, "has lately given them a

¹ "The Book Trade," *Hunt's Merch. Mag.* [New York] (May 1843). 488.

² "The Sandwich Islands," *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* [New York] (July 1843). 5.

constitution and a code of equitable laws.”³

Jarves’s book appeared at a turning point in Hawaiian relations with the West. At the time, the United States, Great Britain, and France were recognizing Hawaiian independence. Economically, the archipelago was most closely linked to America. The British had never formally adopted the islands but had had a few near misses, including Captain James Cook’s discovery of them in 1778 and the genesis of a protectorate in 1794. Great Britain and Hawaii developed a special relationship that began to weaken in the 1820s, as American commerce took over, and in 1826, the United States signed a commercial treaty with the islands. But while many Americans celebrated Jarves’s interpretation of the Hawaiian-American tale, others saw the negative effects of the Western presence—most notably the vast depopulation in Hawaii—and opposed the expansion, believing that Western contact’s effect on native Hawaiians had done more harm than good.

A study of American attitudes toward the British presence in Hawaii in the nineteenth century suggests that some Americans identified with the British imperial mindset even before they were themselves free of the British empire. Their perception of Hawaiians as “savage” was soon followed by their designs on the islands, then by the wish to export Protestant Christianity there. But by the 1820s, Americans were already pondering the costs and benefits of overseas expansion, both to themselves and to foreign peoples. While some, like Jarves, would see Western influence on the

³ “Editors’ Book Table.” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* [Philadelphia] (June 1843), 294.

islands as wholly beneficial, many other Americans, especially socialists and Catholics, believed that the negative effects of British and American expansion—which was heavily influenced by Protestant missionaries—outweighed its merits.

“The celebrated navigator Capt. Cook, with four of his people, were killed by the savage inhabitants of a new discovered island in the South Seas,” reported the *Boston Gazette* on April 24, 1780. This bloody obituary was the first reference to the Hawaiian Islands in an American publication. American colonists published and read the news while they were fighting their way out of the British empire—the Siege of Charleston was under way, and the Battle of Yorktown was still a year and a half off. A British blockade had limited American access to news; colonists had only learned of James Cook’s demise from newspapers they found aboard the *Liverpool*, which they had seized as a war prize. But the *Gazette* article reveals the cultural affinity that underlay the Britons’ and Americans’ political differences. American editors frequently quoted British accounts of distant events, which suggests that the editors and their readers shared Great Britain’s perspective on those events. Culturally, many Americans could identify with the Britons’ dominant culture. And few, even those who would defend the Hawaiians, would have questioned the Britons’ reference to the islands’ inhabitants as “savage.”⁴

Concern with British encroachment in the North Pacific is absent from

⁴ *Boston Gazette* quoted in David W. Forbes, comp., *Hawaiian National Bibliography, 1780–1900*: Volume I, 1780–1830 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999). 2; Harry M. Ward, *The American Revolution: Nationhood Achieved, 1763–1788* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 133, 155–60.

American accounts of the late explorer. Certainly, Americans had other concerns at the time—independence would have to precede commercial expansion—and the natives had prevented Cook from claiming the islands outright. He was, however, able to name them the Sandwich Islands, in honor of his patron, the Earl of Sandwich, who was First Lord of the British Admiralty.⁵

Steps toward a formal Anglo-Hawaiian relationship came in 1794. During his visits to Hawaii, Captain George Vancouver encouraged King Kamehameha to cede the islands to Great Britain. From Vancouver's perspective, the arrangement would benefit both sides: while possession of the islands would facilitate Britain's participation in the burgeoning North Pacific trade—and would end the struggle for control of Hawaii—the technologically weak Hawaiians would gain protection from a powerful ally. Furthermore, Vancouver believed that Cook's discovery of the archipelago gave Great Britain "the priority of claim." The appeal for Kamehameha was likely heightened by the close friendship that he and Vancouver had formed, his ability to identify with Great Britain's monarchical government, and the sense of power presented by H.M.S. *Discovery*, the only man-of-war that had visited the islands for several years.⁶ Kamehameha and the district chiefs agreed to the cession and signed away their sovereignty on February 25, 1794, aboard the *Discovery*. The British flag was raised over the islands. An inscription on two copper plates that recorded the cession noted that "the principal chiefs of the islands" had "unanimously

⁵ Ruth Tabrah, *Hawaii: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.). 19.

⁶ Quoted in W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World 1791–1795*, by George Vancouver (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1984), vol. 1, 152.

ceded the island of Owhyhee to his Britannic Majesty and acknowledged themselves subjects of Great Britain.” Vancouver planned to return to the islands with “missionaries and artisans, to civilize and Christianize” the natives, but the home government never ratified the cession, and his plan was never carried out.⁷ The British government was too preoccupied with the Napoleonic Wars to advance their position in the North Pacific.⁸ Britons and Americans disagreed on the nature of the Anglo-Hawaiian relationship as a result of the 1794 agreement. American missionary Hiram Bingham admitted that Hawaiians sought British “friendship and protection” but termed their agreement “not well-defined.” Hawaiians, he explained, did not realize “that Great Britain gives protection only to those whom she rules, and who are expected to pay for being ruled and protected.”⁹

Although a strong Anglo-Hawaiian affinity remained, the United States began to gain ascendancy over Great Britain in Hawaii during the early nineteenth century. While the Royal Navy focused on European affairs, President Thomas Jefferson’s embargo on the belligerents compelled American merchants to trade in other locations—including Hawaii.¹⁰ But Isaac Davis and John Young, Britons who served as foreign advisers to King Kamehameha, continued to cultivate the Anglo-Hawaiian

⁷ W. D. Alexander, *A Brief History of the Hawaiian People* (New York: American Book Company, 1899), 140, 140n.

⁸ George Godwin, *Vancouver: A Life, 1757–1798* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1931), 16–17.

⁹ Alexander, 139; Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands* (Canandaigua, N.Y.: H.D. Goodwin, 1855), 44–45.

¹⁰ Robert H. Stauffer, “The Hawai‘i-United States Treaty of 1826,” *Hawaiian J. of Hist.* (1983), 40–41.

relationship.¹¹ British mariners served as translators and provided technical expertise to help Kamehameha unite the warring islands. In so doing they won the monarch's trust. In an 1810 letter to George III, Kamehameha reaffirmed the relationship and expressed his wish for closer relations with Great Britain and for material aid. Britain's foreign secretary assured the island king that British ships would drop by regularly to see that all was well if the Hawaiians would, in return, assist British citizens in Hawaii.¹²

Sandalwood and whaling especially attracted Britons and Americans to the islands. In October 1791, Captain John Kendrick of Boston, on the *Lady Washington*, made the first attempt to generate commerce in sandalwood, and the American trade in it was thriving by 1815.¹³ Whaling ships began visiting the region in 1820 when Captain Joseph Allen, aboard the *Mary* out of Nantucket, determined that the North Pacific off the coast of Japan was full of sperm whales.¹⁴ In 1838, a writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (1828–1851) noted that whaling ships brought the United States into “constant intercourse” with the Sandwich Islands, which served as “the half-way house between South America and China.”¹⁵ A writer for the *Merchants' Magazine* termed the Pacific islands “the inn-keepers of that vast

¹¹ Ibid., 40.

¹² Richard MacAllan, “Richard Charlton: A Reassessment,” *Hawaiian J. of Hist.* (1996), 55.

¹³ Alexander, 134; Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1939), vol. 10, 329 (hereafter cited as *DAB*); Stauffer, “Treaty,” 41.

¹⁴ Bingham, 134; Alexander, 175.

¹⁵ “Sandwich Islands,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Oct. 31, 1838), 209.

ocean.”¹⁶

The Westerners’ presence in the islands eroded Hawaiians’ faith in their *kapu*, or taboo system, in which certain times, places, and people were deemed sacred. *Kapu* constituted “the organizing principle of Hawaiian society,”¹⁷ but the natives questioned its strictures when they saw foreigners violate them with impunity. Hawaiians officially abandoned idol worship in 1819. Although many Hawaiians had long since given up their native gods, Kamehameha I had refused to surrender the traditional religious practice. Upon Kamehameha’s death in May 1819, nine-year-old Liholiho became Kamehameha II. Queen Kaahumanu—who shared authority with the young monarch—persuaded him to give up idol worship, as she believed that such a move was crucial to his ability to retain power.¹⁸

American missionaries arrived at the islands on March 31, 1820.¹⁹ Their mission had been prompted by the advocacy of Henry Opukahaia, a Hawaiian sailor who came to New England, converted to Christianity, and encouraged ministers to organize a mission to the archipelago. The missionaries were persuaded that Hawaii would be a promising site for their labors.²⁰ The British were wary of the American missionaries’ arrival but did not object to their presence, so long as they focused on theological matters. Part of the Britons’ concern derived from reports that missionaries

¹⁶ “The Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands, part 1,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (July 1843). 16.

¹⁷ Arthur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 53.

¹⁸ Tabrah, 34–35; Alexander, 166–67, 169.

¹⁹ Alexander, 174.

²⁰ Mary Zwiép, *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 13–14.

dominated trade and government at the Society Islands. The native king shared his concerns with the group's leader, Hiram Bingham, soon after the *Thaddeus* docked. As noted in the *Missionary Herald* (1805–1951), Bingham and his colleagues assured the king that “we had nothing to do with the political concerns of these islands; that there was no collision between the people of the United States and the people of Great Britain; and that several stations were occupied by American missionaries in the British dominions.”²¹ The chiefs accepted Bingham's arguments but still wrote to Great Britain about the issue, “to prevent any misunderstanding.”²² The fact that the chiefs felt compelled to assure the British “that American missionaries had come to settle here not to do any harm, but to teach the people of these islands all good things”—and to do so to “obviate ... the fear of displeasing Great Britain”—indicates the special relationship between Great Britain and Hawaii at the time.²³

The missionaries were very successful, very quickly, as they converted natives to Christianity and organized schools. By the end of 1824, two thousand Hawaiians had learned to read.²⁴ By 1842, the Quaker journal the *Friend* (1827–1955) could report that missionaries in Hawaii boasted of “505 teachers, and 18,034 scholars” in “357 schools in which the elementary branches, reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography, are taught.”²⁵ And congregations were swelling. “It has got to be so common to hear of hundreds being baptized at once,” Edwin O. Hall, a missionary

²¹ “Sandwich Islands Mission:—Joint Letter of the Missionaries.” *Miss. Her.* [Boston] (April 1821), 117. Bingham recalled the missionaries' assurances in his memoirs (Bingham, 88).

²² Bingham, 88.

²³ “Sandwich Islands Mission:—Journal of the Missionaries.” *Miss. Her.* (April 1821), 120.

²⁴ Alexander, 188.

²⁵ “Education in the Sandwich Islands.” *Friend* [Philadelphia] (May 28, 1842), 280.

printer in Hawaii, noted for the *Christian Secretary* (1822–1896) in 1839, “that I was hardly surprised to hear, a few days ago, that 1700 were propounded for admission to the church at Hilo.”²⁶ Part of their success can be attributed to the influence they gained with Hawaiian royalty, including Kaahumanu.²⁷ In 1839, a writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* described the “rapid advancement” of the Sandwich Islands, which had amazed the “moral and religious world.” “In the period of only 18 years,” he wrote, “the language has been reduced to a written form, books have been prepared, schools and churches established, and such proficiency made in knowledge that a work on anatomy has been found desirable to supply the increasing call.”²⁸ In the early 1830s, a British writer in the *Free Enquirer* (1825–1835) observed that neither Americans nor Russians had seized the islands because they were “aware of the prior right of England.” “Still,” he added, “the American missionaries may be said to govern them.”²⁹ The United States’ proximity to Hawaii and the freedom with which American merchants could trade also helped make the United States the most prominent foreign presence in the islands.³⁰

Eighteen twenty-four was an important year for relations among Great Britain, the United States, and Hawaii. In July, Hawaii’s king and queen died of measles while visiting London. The British returned the monarchs’ bodies to their homeland aboard

²⁶ “From the Sandwich Islands,” *Chr. Sec.* [Hartford, Conn.] (March 22, 1839).

²⁷ Zwiép. 182.

²⁸ “Sandwich Island Anatomy,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (April 3, 1839), 126.

²⁹ “Missionary Abominations,” *Free Enq.* [New York] (Feb. 2, 1834), 116.

³⁰ Richard MacAllan “Entrepôt to the World: Richard Charlton’s Observations of Trade via Hawai’i, 1828–1841,” *Hawaiian J. of Hist.* (2000), 95–96.

H.M.S. *Blonde* with the respect due to royalty, a gesture that put Anglo-Hawaiian relations on very good terms indeed. The Hawaiian monarchs' ill-fated voyage—which was to have been followed by a stop in the United States—was arranged partially to satisfy their curiosity about Western lands, but also to secure protection against Russia and to learn about Western laws as the Hawaiians prepared to establish a new legal system.³¹ Some interpreted the Britons' good treatment of the monarchs as proof that Great Britain was determined to possess the islands, or at least was reaffirming its special relationship with them.³² George Anson—who inherited the title of Lord Byron upon the death of his revered poet cousin—brought the monarchs home and impressed the native assemblage with lavish gifts.³³ As Congressman Garrett Davis of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs would later note, Byron's voyage to return the late king and queen to their homeland “produced the most favorable impressions” among the Hawaiians, and the affinity was only enhanced by Byron's generosity. The commander “expended, it was said at the time, not less than £20,000 in presents and entertainments given to the royal family and others in authority.”³⁴

An episode earlier that year eventually compelled the United States government to secure a treaty with Hawaii, in order to protect their burgeoning commercial expansion in the North Pacific. In January, the price of government neglect had become obvious when sailors who had been recruited in Hawaii led a

³¹ Alexander, 184; Storrs L. Olson, “The contribution of the voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde* (1825) to Hawaiian ornithology,” *Archives of Natural History* (1996), 1.

³² Stauffer, “Treaty,” 47.

³³ Alexander, 192.

³⁴ Report on Thomas ap Catesby Jones, House of Representatives, 29th Cong., 1st sess., Report No. 108, 2.

mutiny aboard the *Globe*, then sailed the ship to the Mulgrave Islands. Some of the mutineers' fellow seamen later escaped and sailed to Valparaiso, Chile, where they reported the incident. The mutiny highlighted the lawlessness in the region and the fact that no regional force existed to punish the mutineers, help the victims, or prevent future depredations.³⁵ Alarmed at the episode, 137 Nantucket whaling merchants petitioned President James Monroe that December to have a naval force patrol the region. Two more petitions arrived in April 1825 to his successor, John Quincy Adams, from merchants in Nantucket and New Bedford, Massachusetts. The merchants noted that the mutineers had joined the ship at Hawaii and feared that the islands would "become a nest of pirates and murderers" if the United States government did not act.³⁶ To support its commercial expansion, the government could not ignore the problem. "Our commerce is increasing with great rapidity in the region," Samuel L. Southard of the Department of the Navy noted in 1825.³⁷

The merchants saw the government as their best hope. They noted that, when the mutiny had occurred, a "naval force would have contributed to [the victims'] assistance, as well as have afforded a means for the immediate detection of those mutineers, and a refuge for their unoffending companions." But because the United States had no official presence there, "Nothing ... could be done at that time."³⁸ To take no action would leave American property in danger and could have "fatal

³⁵ Gene A. Smith, *Thomas ap Catesby Jones: Commodore of Manifest Destiny* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 51–52.

³⁶ House Rep. No. 108, 9–10, 11–13; quote, 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

consequences” to “the life and liberty of the enterprising mariner.”³⁹ To avoid recurrences of the *Globe* tragedy, therefore, the merchants made their “respectful appeal to the protection of their government.”⁴⁰

In response to the merchants’ memorials, the secretary of the navy ordered Commodore Isaac Hull to apprise himself of the commercial situation in the Sandwich and Society islands, determine the status of Americans in Honolulu, banish “all Americans of bad character” there, and inform the Hawaiian government that additional visits from the United States would be forthcoming. Hull appointed Thomas ap Catesby Jones to lead the mission to Honolulu. Jones arrived at the islands on board the sloop-of-war *Peacock* on October 11, 1826.⁴¹

Although Americans enjoyed a healthy trade with Hawaii at the time, Jones had many diplomatic obstacles to overcome. He had to counteract the Britons’ successful personal diplomacy in the islands. Congressman Garrett Davis noted that “the English government has contrived to possess itself of a very large share of the confidence of those islanders,” not least of which was the successful visit of Lord Byron. The islanders had an “exalted opinion ... of the English nation,” compared with “the poor opinion which they had been taught to entertain of the United States.”⁴²

Jones, however, was up to the task. He persuaded the Hawaiians that the United States was of comparable strength to Great Britain.⁴³ He also persuaded them to sign a treaty whose seven articles included an assertion of “peace and friendship”

³⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁴¹ Stauffer, “Treaty,” 45–46, 47.

⁴² House Rep. No. 108, 2.

⁴³ Stauffer, “Treaty,” 66.

between the powers and their agreement to “commercial intercourse,” so that the parties may “avail themselves of the bounties of Divine Providence.” The Hawaiians promised to protect American vessels and citizens in times of war, to assist in the event of American shipwrecks on Hawaiian shores, and to protect Americans lawfully pursuing commerce on the islands. The Hawaiian monarchs also promised to use all means to prevent desertions from American ships, with the United States providing monetary rewards for all captured deserters. The treaty’s final article ensured most-favored-nation status for the United States in Hawaii.⁴⁴ The treaty was signed on December 27, 1826.⁴⁵ Some have credited Jones’s treaty with preventing Hawaii from becoming a British colony. Jones gave the Hawaiians “a feeling of independence and self-reliance; which alone, it is more than probable, has prevented these islands from being numbered, by this time, among the colonial possessions of Great Britain,” Congressman Davis would conjecture in 1845.⁴⁶

Although the United States government never ratified Jones’s treaty, it has been characterized as “morally binding.” Hawaiians, unfamiliar with the concept of ratification, likely did not realize that the treaty was never a done deal. The document became a model for an 1838 Hawaiian-American treaty. And when the British threatened to dominate Hawaii in 1842, a delegation led by the Reverend William Richards, in appealing to Secretary of State Daniel Webster for help, noted that the king had “*during the last sixteen years, governed himself by the regulations of that*

⁴⁴ House Rep. No. 108. 20.

⁴⁵ Stauffer, “Treaty,” 47–49. 50.

⁴⁶ House Rep. No. 108. 3.

treaty in all his intercourse with citizens of the United States."⁴⁷

Jones's visit secured American hegemony in Hawaii, but soon after he left a literary war began between the United States and Great Britain. British and American writers bickered over Hawaiians' opinions of the American missionaries and their influence on the islands. The debate was framed by conflicting opinions as to what gave a country the right to rule a colony. Britons argued on the basis of discovery and the fact that they forged a close relationship with the Hawaiians first. To further advance their claim, they asserted that American missionaries were unwelcome in the islands. Jeremiah Evarts, meanwhile, in the *North American Review* (1815–Present) downplayed the importance of discovery and challenged allegations of antagonism toward missionaries. The arguments suggest that much of the public based its opinion on control of a foreign people on the expectation that such contact would be mutually beneficial. For this reason, the suggestion that missionaries were unwelcome was a powerful weapon, one that could not go unanswered.

The war of words began with the publication of the *Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde*, an account of the 1826 trip in which George Anson Byron commanded the ship which returned the bodies of the islands' late king and queen to Hawaii. Although Byron was credited as author of the work, it was based on the writings of Richard Rowland Bloxam, a British chaplain on the voyage,⁴⁸ and was embellished by the publishers. It portrayed American missionaries as an overbearing and unwanted presence in the

⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 53–54.

⁴⁸ Olson, 36, 2–3.

islands, while portraying the benevolent, powerful British as the Hawaiians' chosen mentors. Authors of the *Voyage* asserted that King Kamehameha considered the British to have been "not only the most powerful, but the most friendly, of the new nations" because they arrived first—on the "largest and most powerful" vessels—and because they brought presents of animals and vegetables. The king "voluntarily made a cession of the islands to Great Britain" when Vancouver visited, and he hoped for British protection in return.⁴⁹ His son, the review continued, went to England "for the purpose of placing himself and his islands, as his father had done, under the protection of Great Britain."⁵⁰

The *Voyage* also criticized American missionaries for excessive control of the natives. The *Quarterly Review* writer felt that Byron "appears justly to have felt some uneasiness" regarding the American missionaries' "tone, manner, and line of conduct" with the natives. Byron particularly objected to Hiram Bingham's "uncalled for interference in petty concerns wholly unconnected with his mission," such as one episode in which he encouraged native children to spend Saturday evening praying rather than attending a magic lantern show. It was "amazing absurdity," insisted the writer, to "attempt to force the darkest and most dreary parts of puritan discipline upon these poor people."⁵¹ Converts were required "to attend at church five times every day," the article continued, and on Sundays they were forbidden to cook or light a fire, even though Governor Boki of Oahu, who had visited Great Britain with the

⁴⁹ "Sandwich Islanders," [London] *Qrtly. Rev.* (March 1827), 421.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 438.

king and queen, pointed out that the British were not nearly so strict on the Sabbath.⁵²

The article included a letter from Boki, in which the native governor complained of Bingham's controlling nature and anti-British lies. "Mr. Bingham ... is trieng evere thing in his pour to have the Law of this country in his own hands," read the letter, which appeared in the *Museum of Foreign Literature and Science* (1822–1842). "All of us ar verry happy to have sum pepel to instruct us in what is rite and good but he wants us to be intirly under his laws which will not do with the natives." Boki went on to portray the influential Bingham as slandering British leaders in order to strengthen his control. "Mr. Bingham," Boki's letter read, "has gone so far as to tell the natives that neither king George nor Lord Biron has any regard for God, or any of the English chiefs, that they are all bad pepel but themselves, and that there is no Redemtion for any of the heads of the English or American nations."⁵³

In the January 1828 *North American Review*, Jeremiah Evarts, a founder of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, fired back. He denounced the London *Quarterly Review*'s assertions of Hawaiian Anglophilia and American missionary oppression. Evarts noted that journals from the voyage of the *Blonde* were sure to be popular, given that the party included Hawaiian royalty and the renowned Lord Byron's cousin. And he lamented that the *Voyage* would "make prejudiced and ill informed readers think contemptuously of Americans, and of the character and labors of the American missionaries."⁵⁴ For the anti-American slant, Evarts blamed

⁵² Ibid., 439.

⁵³ Letter quoted in "Sandwich Islanders," *Mus. of For. Lit. and Sci.* [Philadelphia] (July 1827), 95–96.

⁵⁴ [Jeremiah Evarts], "American Missionaries at the Sandwich Islands," *N. Amer. Rev.* [Boston]

editor Maria Graham, “a sort of literary *redacteur*, or intellectual mechanic,” who prepared the journal for publication.⁵⁵ She included the opinions of midshipmen, who “knew nothing of the native language; and had few opportunities of learning the condition of the people, or the effects of the mission.”⁵⁶

Also, Evarts defended Hiram Bingham. He dismissed as false the story that children had been led away in tears when Bingham forbade them to attend the magic lantern show and included a letter from Bingham in which the missionary insisted that no children had been prevented from attending.⁵⁷ Evarts insisted that Bloxam had never written that Bingham lost “*no opportunity of mingling in every business*” and argued that, at an occasion on which Bingham supposedly said “*a long dull grace*” before the group ate, other accounts indicate that Bingham had not said grace at all.⁵⁸ Evarts considered the source of the anti-missionary bias to be the missionaries’ opposition to licentious behavior and to the fact that their “great influence upon the people” would “ultimately clash with that right of guardianship and protection, which is claimed for the British.”⁵⁹

According to Evarts, the Boki letter was a forgery. “The whole is English, as to thought, style, and idiom,” he pointed out in his rebuttal, and the errors “are very different from the errors of an ignorant foreigner.” Furthermore, Boki did not even know English. “In the autumn of 1826,” Evarts insisted, “plain sentences, uttered by

(January 1828), 65; *DAB*, vol. 6, 215.

⁵⁵ [Evarts], “American Missionaries at the Sandwich Islands,” 63–64.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 92, 87.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

Captain [Thomas ap Catesby] Jones of the United States navy, were designedly misinterpreted to him [Boki] in public, and without any fear he would detect the error.”⁶⁰ If Boki could not understand simple English in the fall of 1826, the logic went, then he hardly could have written a coherent letter in the language the previous January.

Evarts regarded the *Voyage* as propaganda to strengthen Great Britain’s hold on the islands, as he doubted that Hawaii would remain independent for long. Giving the appearance “that the Sandwich Islands are under the special guardianship of Great Britain,” he explained, was a “favorite design of the editor.” Evarts noted that the British confessed that they were befriendng the islanders as much “*for our own sake*” as for theirs, because their commercial interests in the Pacific would suffer if the islands ““should fall into the hands of the Russians or Americans.”” Evarts would not weigh in on whether “it would be wise, or unwise, for the British or the American cabinet to desire colonies in the Pacific,” but he insisted that “things are now tending toward the occupation of these islands by a foreign power, and this result seems inevitable.”⁶¹

Three months later the *Christian Spectator* (1819–1838) joined the fray, congratulating the *North American Review* for vindicating the missionaries’ character “in the most triumphant manner” and seconding its assertions that Graham had played fast and loose with the facts. “She was making a book to *sell*,” the writer explained of

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 108, 110.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

Graham, “and a spice of the marvellous was well suited to her design.”⁶² According to the *Christian Spectator* writer, Graham tailored the book for a British audience that had little love for missionaries—a “little abuse” of them and their efforts would “please the public,” he wrote—and Britons had “a settled hostility to the Missionary cause in the Sandwich Islands.”⁶³ This enmity derived from missionaries’ efforts to protect natives from being duped by Westerners, their enforcing “the observance of *the seventh commandment*,” and British captains’ “jealousy of the Missionaries as *Americans*.”⁶⁴

The influence of damning texts such as the *Voyage* and the London *Quarterly Review* article were sufficient to merit such extended refutation. Their impact went beyond their initial publication; the *Quarterly Review* article, for example, was reprinted in the July 1827 *Museum of Foreign Literature and Science*, which was published in Philadelphia. Jeremiah Evarts admitted his concern that people who read inaccurate statements would believe and build upon them. And he lamented that the book’s sensationalism would make it more popular. It was an “evil greatly magnified,” he explained, “by the currency which is given, through reviews and other channels, to what is pernicious.”⁶⁵ And a *Christian Spectator* writer implored his readers to read the Reverend Charles Stewart’s journal about the Sandwich Islands, which sided more with the missionaries, because he feared the negative opinions of “those whose notions of missionaries and of missionary matters, are derived from the masters of English

⁶² “Misrepresentations of the London Quarterly Review,” *Chr. Spec.* [New Haven, Conn.] (April 1828), 197.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 197, 200.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 200–01.

⁶⁵ [Evarts], “American Missionaries at the Sandwich Islands,” 82, 66, 67.

whaling vessels, and the London Quarterly Review.”⁶⁶ The *Christian Spectator* writer admitted to similar motivations for his lengthy response. “We have thought proper to give this subject a more extended notice,” he explained, “because the London Quarterly Review being very generally read in this country, its misrepresentations ought to be exposed.”⁶⁷

British critiques of American missionaries in Hawaii likely derived, at least in part, from their own frustration as they watched the islands slip from their control. By the time *Voyage of H.M.S. Blonde* was published, the United States predominated in the archipelago. But there were other detractors of the Hawaiian situation—many Americans regarded the changes that Britons and Americans had effected with a jaundiced eye. The British had introduced syphilis and firearms, and convicts from Botany Bay, Australia, introduced alcohol. And while American missionaries deprived Hawaiians of simple pleasures and scared the new converts, their faith in Providence led them to accept high mortality rates among the native population as the will of God. Americans tended to subscribe to one of two major interpretations of the Hawaiian situation. Some saw the Western (and especially American missionary) presence as beneficial, by bringing islanders from a condition of indolent, immoral, heathen squalor to lives of clean, decorous, Christian industry. They criticized the prevalence of alcohol in the islands but had less to say about firearms and the high numbers of native deaths from disease. Meanwhile, other Americans—most notably Catholics and

⁶⁶ “Stewart’s Journal in the Sandwich Islands,” *Chr. Spec.* (March 1829). 176.

⁶⁷ “Misrepresentations of the London Quarterly Review,” 203.

socialists—believed that the Hawaiians were better off before contact. Unwilling to accept religious justifications, they criticized Westerners' changes to the islands—including installing an established religion, strictly enforcing their Calvinist vision, and attributing high death tolls to Providence.

Missionaries who described pre-contact Hawaii saw a devil in the deep blue sea. Thomas Gallaudet, best known for his work with the deaf, spoke of Hawaiians as being “plunged in the lowest depths of sensuality and sin.”⁶⁸ According to a writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (1817–1909), “the marriage relation was unknown, other than passion dictated,” and “Infanticide was common.”⁶⁹ “Violence, fraud, lust, and pollution” pervaded the islands’ “whole history from the oldest traditions of the origin of their race,” Hiram Bingham insisted,⁷⁰ and in 1856 a writer for the *Friend* would characterize the islands as “a jewel plucked from the hand of Satan to adorn the diadem of Immanuel.”⁷¹

As mentioned before, the missionaries had great success in the islands. And their changes extended beyond a narrow vision of Christian conversion. When the missionaries arrived at the islands, they had rolled up their sleeves and set about changing the islanders’ entire lives. Presence in church on Sunday morning would mean little if the congregation were dressed immodestly, if they had not been industrious the previous six days, or if they did not honor the sanctity of marriage and

⁶⁸ Thomas H. Gallaudet, *An Address, Delivered at a Meeting for Prayer, with Reference to the Sandwich Mission* (Hartford: Lincoln & Stone, 1819), 8; *DAB*, vol. 7, 110.

⁶⁹ “Miscellaneous:—History of the Hawaiian, or Sandwich Islands,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* [Boston] (July 1843), 190.

⁷⁰ Bingham, 23.

⁷¹ “The Great Volcanic Eruption,” *Friend* (Feb. 23, 1856), 185.

the responsibilities of parenthood. Therefore, missionaries frequently described their success by enumerating secular improvements. Writers for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* celebrated a society in which families lived in "neat and comfortable dwellings," men "wore shirts and pantaloons," "women appeared in white and calico dresses," and children sang temperance songs at Thanksgiving celebrations.⁷² Because Hawaiians lacked "clocks or watches to regulate their time," the missionaries wished for additional bells, which would "produce that precision in repairing to school, or to public worship, which is extremely desirable."⁷³ They also encouraged native industry. In 1839, a writer for the *Catholic Telegraph* (1831–1846) found "at Kailua a Cotton Factory, with two looms and twenty spindles" that produced "an encouraging specimen" of cloth.⁷⁴ In 1843, the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* reported that "the labors of the needle have been universal."⁷⁵

Many Americans, including scientists, saw only the missionaries' progress when they visited the islands. In 1841, *Godey's Lady's Book* quoted a member of Captain Charles Wilkes's exploring expedition who believed that missionaries "deserve[d] infinite credit" for their work with the Hawaiians, who were "further advanced in civilization, dress better, and live better than I had been taught to

⁷² "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Sandwich Islands." *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (February 1839), 42; "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions:—Sandwich Islands." *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (December 1845), 316.

⁷³ "Mission to the Sandwich Islands:—Journal of the Missionaries." *Miss. Her.* (September 1821), 283.

⁷⁴ "The Sandwich Islands." *Cath. Tel.* [Cincinnati] (May 2, 1839), 163.

⁷⁵ "Miscellaneous:—History of the Hawaiian, or Sandwich Islands." *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (July 1843), 191–92.

expect.”⁷⁶ And a writer for the *American Journal of Science* (1818–1938) felt

“pleasure” when he thought of the accomplishments of the missionaries, who had

in a few short years, converted many thousands of barbarous and degraded savages into civilized and Christianized men; whose high moral character, whose pure and courteous manners, and whose advancement in the arts, and in political happiness, are a constant theme of astonishment to the navigators who throng that great highway of nations.⁷⁷

The notion that changes to Hawaiian culture came at the islanders’ behest credited Hawaiians with the ability to effect positive change while devolving to them the responsibility for the reforms. How could Americans be blamed, if they only responded to native pleas? A writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* characterized a work on human physiology—published in the native language—as responding to natives’ “thirst for knowledge in the isles of the sea.”⁷⁸ In 1836, a writer for the *American Jurist and Law Magazine* (1829–1843) noted that Hawaiian chiefs felt incompetent to come up with their systems of law, so “they wrote to their ‘friends in the United States,’ *requesting* that a civilian might be sent to them, on whom they might rely as a correct teacher of the science of government.”⁷⁹ And according to a writer for the Presbyterian *Princeton Review* (1825–1888), Christianity had become Hawaii’s religion because the people willed it. Hawaii featured “Christian churches,” he wrote, “built by the people themselves, at their own suggestion, and accommodating, some of them, a native congregation of several thousand willing

⁷⁶ Quoted in “Editors’ Table: Missionaries of the Sandwich Islands,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (April 1841), 189.

⁷⁷ “Notice of Hawaii. (Owyhee,) and its Volcanic Regions, &c.,” *Am. J. of Sci., &c.* [New Haven, Conn.] (1831), 230.

⁷⁸ “A System of Physiology in Honolulu,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Feb. 28, 1844), 85.

⁷⁹ “Laws of the Sandwich Islands,” *Amer. Jurist and Law Mag.* [Boston] (July 1841), 311. Emphasis added.

worshippers.”⁸⁰

The only critique that several Protestant sources voiced at the time regarding the Western presence in Hawaii was the introduction of alcohol, which made the islands “the great dram-shop of the Pacific,” according to the *Princeton Review*.⁸¹ Botany Bay convicts had introduced the process of distilling alcohol to Hawaiians in the late eighteenth century.⁸² By 1821, alcohol was “far more formidable than ... all the weapons of war on the islands,” according to a writer for the *Missionary Herald*. “Strong drink” made Hawaiians “unfit for business,” but “[m]ost white men” with whom the islanders interacted were “in league with this enemy of all righteousness.”⁸³ And alcohol’s popularity grew. In 1825, patrons could select from among twenty-three saloons in a single mile of Lahaina’s Front Street, on the island of Maui. Although liquor’s availability led to brawling, a prohibition on its sale led to rioting.⁸⁴ Some merchants worked to create a sober Hawaii. In 1845, *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* congratulated the merchants of Peck & Co. for buying Lahaina’s liquor license at an auction in order to stop the “sale of ardent spirits” and thus create a dry island. Such sales, the writer explained, had been “carried on to the great demoralization of the inhabitants, as well as to the crews of vessels which touched there.”⁸⁵

Firearms became popular in the islands, but they attracted far less concern than

⁸⁰ “The Sandwich Islands,” *Princeton Rev.* [New York, Philadelphia, and Princeton, N. J.] (October 1848), 506.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 524.

⁸² Alexander, 157.

⁸³ “Sandwich Island Mission: Journal of the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (May 1821), 131.

⁸⁴ Richard Ellis, *Men and Whales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 163.

⁸⁵ “Liberality of an American Merchant,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (January 1845), 105.

did alcohol. In 1788, according to British surgeon Archibald Menzies, Hawaiians had “shuddered at the report of a musquet.” But when Menzies accompanied Captain George Vancouver on a voyage to the islands in 1792, he realized that much had changed. “Nothing was ... held in greater estimation or more eagerly sought after than arms & powder,” he noted of the trip. Natives handled the weapons “with a degree of ease & dexterity that equalld the most expert veteran,” and Vancouver found them reluctant to trade for anything else.⁸⁶ Many Westerners willingly provided guns, to win Hawaiians’ friendship and to convey their own superiority over other Western nations.⁸⁷ The wish for firearms disturbed Vancouver, who believed that the weapons encouraged warfare in the islands.⁸⁸ But some saw the weapons as a positive change. James Jackson Jarves explained that guns had “generally been beneficial” in Hawaii because “wars have ceased as soon as one leading chief secured the ascendancy.” But this was not a simple case of might makes right; chiefs with weapons on their side also had the support of foreign suppliers. The chiefs’ power was “frequently established through the assistance of whites” and therefore, Jarves observed, firearms enabled “the Christian party” to win.⁸⁹

Americans were split on other aspects of the Western presence in Hawaii, such as whether Western commerce helped or hurt the native population. Some insisted that commerce benefited the Hawaiians. In his *Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises*, Richard J. Cleveland credited “the ameliorating and humanizing effects of

⁸⁶ Quoted in Lamb, ed., vol. 1, 71.

⁸⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, 72.

⁸⁸ Alexander, 135n; Lamb, ed., vol. 1, 71, 126.

⁸⁹ “The Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (July 1843), 23.

commerce" with "the great improvement in the moral and social condition of the Sandwich Islands."⁹⁰ A writer for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* concurred. "Commerce, even with an inferior class of whites," he insisted, gave Hawaiians "a suspicion that there existed better civilized people than resided among them."⁹¹ But others saw deleterious effects. Richard H. Dana—who had his own experience at sea, captured in *Two Years Before the Mast*—pointed out that idolatry remained in the islands long after Western commerce was introduced. Success there, he insisted, "is to be attributed to the missionaries ... not only without the aid, but in spite of the resistance, of commerce."⁹² Traders encouraged Hawaiians to collect sandalwood for trade, which left islanders with "only two whole days for the purpose of tillage and growing their necessary food," according to T. Horton James in the *Free Enquirer*. Reportedly, such time limits caused famine. And their time for agriculture was further decreased by missionaries, who took adults "away from their enclosures of taro and potatoes to learn to read and spell."⁹³

Many Americans saw the negative effects of the missionaries' presence and came to oppose their own nation's imperialism. Their criticisms ranged from missionaries depriving natives of innocent pleasures to their instituting policies that could be downright dangerous. In 1837, the *Catholic Telegraph* reported the observation of a French sea captain that Protestant missionaries' "evils" "far exceed

⁹⁰ [R. H. Dana], "Cleveland's Voyages," *N. Amer. Rev.* (July 1842), 192.

⁹¹ "The Sandwich Islands," *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* (July 1843), 7.

⁹² [Dana], "Cleveland's Voyages," 192, 195.

⁹³ "American Missionaries in the Sandwich Islands," *Free Enq.* (March 23, 1833), 174; Alexander, 158.

the good they have been able to effect” in Hawaii.⁹⁴ He was not alone in his belief.

“The missionaries have prohibited fishing, bathing, Jews harps, and the surfboard, and every other description of amusement among the native population,” wrote T. Horton James.⁹⁵ Otto von Kotzebue, a captain in the Russian imperial navy, had visited Honolulu in February 1825 and was shocked at what he saw upon his return seven months later, after the missionaries had realized their vision:

The streets, formerly so full of life and animation, are now deserted; games of all kinds, even the most innocent, are sternly prohibited; singing is a punishable offence; and the consummate profligacy of attempting to dance would certainly find no mercy.⁹⁶

Others, including socialists, opposed the way the missionaries taught natives about Christianity. In 1830, Robert Dale Owen—a socialist and Welsh native who served as an editor of New York’s *Free Enquirer*—feared the arrival of established religion in Hawaii. He considered an established church to be the “curse of civilized nations” which instilled in their congregations “those very polemical subtleties that have deluged Europe with blood.”⁹⁷ Others opposed the teaching of a complex theology. A writer for the *Christian Register* (1821–Present) wished that missionaries did not consider it “essential” to explain to natives the concept of the trinity. With such an approach, he lamented, “how imperfect and confused must be [Hawaiians’] conceptions of God.”⁹⁸ T. Horton James, who initially supported the missionaries’

⁹⁴ “Missionary Intelligence,” *Cath. Tel.* (March 9, 1837), 110.

⁹⁵ Quoted in “American Missionaries in the Sandwich Islands,” *Free Enq.* (March 23, 1833), 174.

⁹⁶ Otto von Kotzebue, *New Voyage round the World, in the Years 1823, 24, 25, and 26* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), title page, 256–57, also quoted in Linda McKee, “‘Mad Jack’ and the Missionaries,” *Amer. Heritage* (April 1971), 33.

⁹⁷ R.D.O., “Church and State in the Sandwich Islands,” *Free Enq.* (June 5, 1830), 249.

⁹⁸ “Sandwich Islands Missions,” *Chr. Reg.* [Boston] (Nov. 1, 1828), 174.

work, believed that, by filling their sermons with warnings of “the horrible place of torment in everlasting flames,” missionaries only installed a “system of frightening the people.”⁹⁹ And in 1834, the *Free Enquirer* quoted a British writer who observed that American missionaries had made the natives “their slaves ... terrified by their denunciations into the most implicit obedience.” He therefore felt qualified to suggest that the missionaries “exceed even our own Colonial Office in the art of misrule.”¹⁰⁰

For many Americans, Hawaii’s rapid depopulation was one of the strongest sources of concern. Just before the first missionaries left for the islands, Hawaiians were decidedly worse off than they had been at the time of Captain Cook’s 1778 arrival, due to “a loathsome disease, and the use of distilled spirits,” according to Jeremiah Evarts.¹⁰¹ Cook’s crew had brought a “syphilitic taint” to the islands, explained a writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, and fifty years after the visit, the illness had “not been eradicated.”¹⁰² In 1828, the *American Quarterly Review* (1827–1837) quoted Kaahumanu’s estimate “that the population of the Islands had diminished three fourths since captain Cook’s visit” fifty years earlier.¹⁰³ And it seemed that the population would not rebound anytime soon. “Many of the women are incapable of child-bearing,” noted another writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, in 1846, “and of the infants born, only a few live to come to maturity.” The Westerners brought other pathogens as well. “Diseases of the natives were very few”

⁹⁹ Quoted in “American Missionaries in the Sandwich Islands,” *Free Enq.* (March 23, 1833), 174.

¹⁰⁰ “Missionary Abominations,” *Free Enq.* (Feb. 2, 1834), 116.

¹⁰¹ [Evarts], “American Missionaries at the Sandwich Islands,” 77.

¹⁰² “Sandwich Islands,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Oct. 31, 1838), 209; Bingham, 33.

¹⁰³ “The Sandwich Islands,” *Am. Qrtly. Rev.* [Boston] (June 1828), 353.

before contact, and illnesses that afflicted European children had been unknown. By the 1840s, however, disease pervaded the islands. “Scrofulous complaints are now common,” the writer stated, “and pulmonary consumption is of frequent occurrence. They usually commence in early life and terminate either in death or a large curvature of the spine.” Charles Wilkes observed that illness “pervades the entire population ... and has reduced the natives to a morbid, sickly condition.”¹⁰⁴

Some Americans predicted the extinction of the Hawaiian race. For some, the outcome was distasteful but acceptable. Dr. Robert W. Wood studied diseases in the islands in the 1830s but seemed less interested in curing Hawaiians than in safeguarding other populations. Those who were “most conversant with the statistics of the South Sea people” believed “that the entire race will probably wholly disappear in the course of half a century,” admitted a writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1838. Wood was therefore trying to determine “the causes which threaten this result,” and whether they were European or native in origin.¹⁰⁵ The staff of *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* believed that “short of utter extermination, no people have ever been more abused” than the Hawaiians, but ultimately they too accepted the Hawaiians’ fate. Even if “Civilization has diminished their numbers to a mere remnant,” the reviewers pointed out, “that remnant are at last in a fair way to take rank among the nations of the earth.”¹⁰⁶

Other Americans were more disturbed at the potential death of the race, which

¹⁰⁴ “Diseases in the South-Sea Islands,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (May 20, 1846), 325; “Diseases at the Sandwich Islands,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Nov. 27, 1844), 346.

¹⁰⁵ “Sandwich Islands,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Oct. 31, 1838), 209.

¹⁰⁶ “The Book Trade,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (May 1843), 488.

many considered a *fait accompli*. Writers for the *Catholic Telegraph* mocked Protestants for only being able to convert Hawaiians “by rooting out the natives, and planting a foreign colony!!!” and criticized the Protestants’ use of firearms. “The only conversion these men were likely to operate among the copper-coloured heathen,” a *Catholic Telegraph* staff member wrote, “was the conversion of living men into carcasses.”¹⁰⁷ A writer for the *Southern Literary Messenger* (1834–1864) was too mournful to make jokes. “Between England and America, and the convenience of stopping [in Hawaii] for their whalemens,” he wrote in 1837, “the islands will be covered soon with the white races of the *Anglo-Saxon blood*, and no place will be left, no home assigned, to the rightful owners of these beautiful and romantic groupes.” He recommended that Hawaii’s king enjoy his rule while he could, because it would be short-lived. “Is not this *colonization* ‘the thrice-told tale,’” he asked. It always began

with pious offerings, tender sympathies, and disinterested and gratuitous profferings to relieve the afflicted heathen of their barbarian ignorance and pagan idolatry, and all that sort of flummery,—and ever ending, with the same fatal and unerring precisions, in rapacious extortion, extermination of the duped natives, and conquest of their territory?¹⁰⁸

The similarity of the Hawaiians’ fate to that of American Indians could explain a similar lament from a writer for the *Mohawk Liberal*. In 1833, the writer described the islands as “a flourishing country laid waste, and a little world of nature’s children well nigh annihilated by a hypocritical horde of saintly marauders, in the name of the Holy

¹⁰⁷ “France and the Sandwich Islands,” *Cath. Tel.* (March 21, 1840), 93; “Protestant Mission—Sandwich Islands,” *Cath. Tel.* (May 14, 1842), 156.

¹⁰⁸ “A Succinct Account of the Sandwich Islands,” *South. Lit. Mess.* [Richmond] (July 1837), 423–24.

Ghost.”¹⁰⁹

Several Christian denominations were rather quiet on the subject of native mortality. Their silence may be attributed to their strong belief in Providence. Missionaries were certain of their need to be in Hawaii. Calvinist theology described a global struggle between God and Satan, in which Satan ruled every unchristian land. Missionaries needed to spread their faith “until paganism and idolatry shall have been banished from the earth, and every nation shall be universally illuminated with the light of revelation,” explained a writer for the *American Quarterly Review*.¹¹⁰ Therefore, Hawaii needed to be saved. “In those Islands, are many thousands of immortal beings, for whom the Redeemer died,” explained Samuel Worcester, of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, but they “know him not, and are perishing for lack of knowledge.”¹¹¹ “Satan, by his varied and malevolent agencies, had ruled and ruined generation after generation,” Hiram Bingham agreed.¹¹²

The missionaries’ belief that God was on their side was supported by episodes that must be attributed, if not to Providence, then to coincidence. Chief among them was the Hawaiian king’s decision to end idol worship just months before the first missionaries arrived. While the death of Kamehameha I made the time right in Hawaii to do away with idol worship, the death of native convert Henry Opukahaia in New England the year before inspired the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign

¹⁰⁹ *Mohawk Liberal* quoted in “Missionary Abominations,” *Free Enq.* (Nov. 17, 1833), 32.

¹¹⁰ “The Sandwich Islands,” *Am. Qtly. Rev.* (June 1828), 342.

¹¹¹ Heman Humphrey, *A Sermon, Delivered at Goshen, (Conn.) at the Ordination of the Rev. Messrs. Hiram Bingham & Asa Thurston, as Missionaries to the Sandwich Islands* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1819), 11.

¹¹² Bingham, 94.

Missions to plan the first journey to Hawaii.¹¹³ Hiram Bingham recalled the missionaries' joy when they heard the news of the end of idol worship, upon reaching the islands:

How were our hearts surprised, agitated, and encouraged beyond every expectation, to hear the report—"Kamehameha is dead—His son Liholiko is king—the tabus are abolished ...!" The hand of God! how visible in thus beginning to answer the prayer of his people, for the Hawaiian race!¹¹⁴

The *Christian Register* quoted the *North American Review*'s agreement that the "hand of providence seems to have prepared the field for their labors."¹¹⁵ "A Divine Providence had opened the way for the welcome reception of Christianity at the Sandwich Islands, before the bearers of the Cross had reached their shores," assented a *Catholic Telegraph* writer.¹¹⁶ And a writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* also saw the timing as divinely ordained. "In the providence of God," he wrote, "idolatry received its death blow before they arrived."¹¹⁷

Chroniclers saw God's hand in other fortuitous episodes, and their interpretations reinforced their belief in the righteousness of the mission. A writer for the *Princeton Review* regretted the arrival of Catholic missionaries on the islands, but he admitted to seeing "great cause for acknowledging the hand of Providence, that these intruders had not appeared at a less advantageous stage of the evangelization of the islands."¹¹⁸ In describing the large numbers of religious tracts printed and natives

¹¹³ Tabrah, 34–35, 37.

¹¹⁴ Bingham, 70.

¹¹⁵ "Sandwich Islands," *Chr. Reg.* (April 15, 1826), 60.

¹¹⁶ "A Catholic Story," *Cath. Tel.* (June 10, 1843).

¹¹⁷ "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Sandwich Islands," *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (July 1839), 181.

¹¹⁸ "The Sandwich Islands," *Princeton Rev.* (October 1848), 518.

baptized in Hawaii, missionary printer Edwin O. Hall observed that “The Lord seems to remove every obstacle from the path of the mission.”¹¹⁹ And in the *Missionary Herald* in 1821, missionaries detailed the fortunate appearance of a friendly native chief at a time when they needed his assistance. “We could not fail to regard this as a smile of Providence,” they wrote, “and we could scarcely avoid exclaiming, *the Lord is on our side.*”¹²⁰

Their faith in Providence led the missionaries to accept even negative episodes as part of God’s mysterious plan. When William Tennooe, a native Christian, was found guilty of “intemperance and sabbath-breaking”—and “avowed his determination to continue the same course”—the missionaries deemed him an example of how “a kind and amiable youth” could become “a dissipated, idle, reckless being” unless such behavior were prevented by “divine grace.” In this case, Tennooe’s loss of influence was providential.¹²¹ Providence even removed death’s tragic quality. To a *Catholic Telegraph* writer, the “strange pestilence which . . . cut down an immense number of the Islanders” just before the missionaries arrived was good, because it paved the way for the new arrivals.¹²² The Reverend Sheldon Dibble saw “the hand of God” in the king and queen’s decision to visit England, and through their deaths saw “the deliverance of a sinking nation.”¹²³ “There is something melancholy in witnessing the

¹¹⁹ “From the Sandwich Islands,” *Chr. Sec.* (March 22, 1839).

¹²⁰ “Sandwich Island Mission:—Journal of the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (April 1821), 119–20.

¹²¹ “Mission to the Sandwich Islands:—Journal of the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (August 1821), 241.

¹²² “A Catholic Story,” *Cath. Tel.* (June 10, 1843), 177.

¹²³ Rev. Sheldon Dibble, *History and General Views of the Sandwich Islands’ Mission* (New-York: Taylor & Dodd, 1839), 87, 88, also noted in Rt. Rev. Harry Bond Restarick, *Hawaii 1778–1920 from the Viewpoint of a Bishop* (Honolulu, 1924), 45.

gradual disappearance of a race of men from the earth,” a writer for *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* admitted, but he attributed to “the designs of Providence,” “this gradual extinction and blending of races.”¹²⁴

Meanwhile, other Americans were less willing to accept Providence as the universal justification. In 1822, a missionary’s account of a major fire appeared in the *Missionary Herald*.¹²⁵ The fire destroyed eleven houses on Kauai, at which point the wind changed direction and the remaining houses were saved. “The arm of the Lord,” the missionary explained, “was extended for their deliverance.”¹²⁶ A writer for the *Free Enquirer*—who called himself “No Providence”—was unimpressed with such logic. “He is a curious fellow, this Providence,” he observed in 1834. “He never makes his appearance in time.”

For instance, when a steam boiler bursts, if Providence, instead of waiting to let the water get low in the boiler, and thereby produce the catastrophe ... had but jogged the engineer’s elbow in time, and told him not to let the water get low in the boiler, ... nothing would have been wrong, and nobody injured.¹²⁷

Robert Dale Owen, editor of the *Free Enquirer*, shared the skepticism of No Providence, and noted that those who attributed things to Providence selected the events to be deemed providential. In so doing, they claimed to speak for God. “Nothing is more common,” he wrote in 1829, “than for men to ascribe to divine Providence whatever favors the interests either of themselves, or of the community to which they belong. To be consistent they ought to ascribe all their misfortunes to the

¹²⁴ “The Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (July 1843), 21.

¹²⁵ Tabrah, 19.

¹²⁶ “Sandwich Islands Mission:—Journal of the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (July 1822), 210.

¹²⁷ No Providence, “Providence,” *Free Eng.* (June 8, 1834), 260.

devil, and then nothing would happen naturally.”¹²⁸

Amid debates over the merits of Western presence in Hawaii, the United States continued to gain commercial ascendancy. The islands were not officially the ward of any nation, but theirs was a nervous independence. In 1839, the French blockaded Honolulu harbor to try to force the kingdom to accept Catholic missionaries. This action prompted the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to begin memorializing Congress to protect missionaries in Hawaii from European aggression. This pressure, and lobbying by Hawaiians for recognition of the islands’ independence, helped move President John Tyler and Secretary of State Daniel Webster to formulate a Hawaii policy. On December 11, 1842, in his State of the Union address, President John Tyler declared that the Monroe Doctrine’s opposition to foreign intervention included the Hawaiian Islands, and that Hawaiian sovereignty ought to be respected.¹²⁹ In the Tyler Doctrine, which was announced later that month, the administration opposed any nation’s attempt “to take possession of the islands, colonize them, and subvert the native Government.”¹³⁰

Lord George Paulet of Great Britain demonstrated the islands’ vulnerability in February 1843, however, when he sailed into Honolulu aboard H.M.S. *Carysfort* without offering a salute. He arrived there in response to reports that Hawaiian authorities were treating British residents unfairly and rumors that the United States or

¹²⁸ “On Providence,” *Free Enq.* (May 6, 1829), 221.

¹²⁹ Stauffer, “Treaty,” 54; “The Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (August 1843), 135.

¹³⁰ Kenneth E. Shewmaker, ed., *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers, Volume 1, 1841–1843* (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1983), 855.

France might seize the archipelago.¹³¹ On February 17, Paulet warned the Hawaiians that he would take “coercive steps” if they did not comply with his list of demands to address unfair treatment of British subjects.¹³² Even though a Hawaiian commissioner was then in London working out differences between the nations, the islands’ king and premier were in no position to argue. They agreed to cede the islands to Paulet, “subject to the decision of the British Government after the receipt of full information from both parties,” and the British flag was hoisted above the islands.¹³³

Although Paulet acted without the approval of the British government, the incident horrified Americans. A writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* could not believe “that the government of England will sanction an act of such flagrant injustice” and hoped that British Christians would “repudiate the deed.”¹³⁴ And a writer for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* deemed the seizure “brutal,” “an abomination of injustice,” and “one of the most outrageous outrages that have ever disgraced even the foreign domination of that great maritime and mercantile tyranny.”¹³⁵

Americans complained that Paulet was not playing fair, but the real source of their anxiety was his demonstration that an independent Hawaii was vulnerable and that Britons were willing and able to exploit that vulnerability. A writer for *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* insisted that the “military occupation of one of our own

¹³¹ Lamb, ed., vol. 1, 157.

¹³² Alexander, 242–43.

¹³³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 245.

¹³⁴ “Miscellaneous:—History of the Hawaiian, or Sandwich Islands,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (July 1843), 192.

¹³⁵ “The Sandwich Islands,” *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* (July 1843), 15, 14.

territories could scarcely have more excited the American press through the length and breadth of the land.”¹³⁶ And although the *Democratic Review* writer criticized the seizure as a breach of etiquette (“it was in bad taste—shockingly bad”), he was preoccupied with the seizure’s implications for Americans. He admitted that the islands’ “favorable commercial position, the security of their harbors, and the necessary visits of whaling ships” made them crucial to American commerce, and he feared that the British government would condone Paulet’s action, wondering “if the great lion should give up the poor little mouse on which it has thus set its huge paw.” It all came back to the islanders’ inability to defend their sovereignty. Part of Paulet’s attempt “to cede the islands to the British crown,” he noted, could be attributed to “the helplessness of the native government.”¹³⁷

As soon as he heard of the unauthorized seizure, Rear Admiral Richard Thomas—who commanded Britain’s naval forces in the Pacific and had dispatched Paulet to the islands—sailed for Honolulu. Thomas worked out a treaty with the king to secure the rights of British subjects on the islands, and on July 31, 1843, the islands’ independence was restored.¹³⁸ Thomas issued a proclamation in which he declared that “Her Majesty sincerely desires King Kamehameha III to be treated as an independent sovereign.”¹³⁹ But the fact that the Hawaiian Islands remained independent only at

¹³⁶ “The Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (August 1843), 135.

¹³⁷ “The Sandwich Islands,” *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* (July 1843), 15, 14. A writer for the *Princeton Review* brushed over the incident because the British government “immediately disavowed” Paulet’s action, but he wrote when the situation had been favorably settled, several years after the episode and after Great Britain and France had recognized Hawaii’s independence. The others were writing about a current event (“The Sandwich Islands,” *Princeton Rev.* [October 1848], 521).

¹³⁸ Lamb, ed., vol. 1, 157; Tabrah, 57.

¹³⁹ Quoted on Alexander, 249.

Victoria's will showed that Tyler's advocacy of Hawaiian independence was only as strong as the force behind it.

Herman Melville's opinion of the Paulet affair differed from most Americans'. At the time of the takeover, the future author of *Moby Dick* was working as a clerk at a general store in Honolulu. He had deserted the whaleship *Acushnet* in July 1842, at the Marquesas Islands, and by the summer of 1843 had made his way twenty-four hundred miles northwest to Hawaii. Melville would soon leave the clerking job; in August 1843, he enlisted in the United States Navy, likely in order to avoid being found by the *Acushnet* crew, whose arrival in Honolulu was imminent.¹⁴⁰

Melville included his take on the Paulet situation in a five-page appendix to his first novel, 1846's *Typee*. In the appendix, Melville insisted that Hawaii's leaders had unfairly vilified the Englishman. He characterized Hawaii's king as an "imbecile" who was advised by an Anglophobic "junto of ignorant and designing Methodist elders," including the "sanctimonious" Dr. Gerrit P. Judd. According to Melville, the leaders' "iniquitous misadministration of affairs"—which included several "insults and injuries" to British Consul Richard Charlton—compelled Charlton to seek redress. The consul arranged for Paulet's visit, "to enquire into and correct the alleged abuses." Upon his arrival, Paulet and his representatives repeatedly sought an audience with the king, but were refused. These rebuffs caused him, "Justly indignant," to threaten "immediate

¹⁴⁰ Robert S. Forsythe, "Herman Melville in Honolulu," *New Eng. Qlty.* (1935), 102, 100, 99, 103.

hostilities.”¹⁴¹

The Hawaiian leaders’ reactions to Paulet, Melville insisted, were a successful public relations ploy that made the rest of the world perceive Paulet’s rule as oppressive. The king ceded the islands temporarily to Great Britain as a way for “the despicable counselors of the king to entrap the sympathies and rouse the indignation of Christendom,” Melville explained. Paulet governed the islands with a “firm and benignant spirit,” he continued, and “endeared himself to nearly all orders of the islanders.” The king and chiefs, however, “Jealous of his growing popularity,” slandered him abroad. Thomas, who approved of Paulet’s actions, then arrived and “brought the authorities to terms.” Once British grievances were redressed, the cession ceased. Hawaiians’ enthusiasm upon the restoration of the flag, in Melville’s opinion, was more smoke and mirrors. The king and chiefs suspended laws for ten days in order to “[secure] a display of enthusiasm” that suggested that Hawaiians were glad to be rid of their British leader. And Melville intimated that British rule had been better than missionary rule for the islanders. He characterized the debauchery of those ten lawless days as “a sort of Polynesian saturnalia” and proof of the missionaries’ ineffectiveness, as the Hawaiians were “as depraved and vicious as ever.” Meanwhile, the islanders still regarded Paulet’s “liberal and paternal sway” as having “diffused peace and happiness among them.”¹⁴²

Melville’s support of Paulet appears to have been case-specific. In Melville’s opinion, the calumny of the American press made it “a mere act of justice” that he

¹⁴¹ Herman Melville. *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 255.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 255, 256, 257, 258.

provide his own perspective on the situation. He had arrived in Boston in the fall of 1844 and was shocked to see how “grossly misrepresented” Paulet had been in the American press.¹⁴³ To explain Melville’s support of Paulet instead of the missionaries, Gerrit P. Judd IV—whose “sanctimonious” ancestor Melville had criticized in the appendix—noted the longstanding opposition between mariners and missionaries in the islands.¹⁴⁴ Judd and others have also noted that Melville’s employer at the general store was an Englishman by birth, which gave Melville “ample opportunity to absorb the English version of Paulet’s seizure of the Islands.”¹⁴⁵

One should not derive from Melville’s opinion of Paulet, however, that the author was a fan of imperialism. *Typee*, in fact, has been cited as “the first major literary resistance to an emerging imperial imagination in the United States.”¹⁴⁶ In the work, Melville challenged the notion that the Western way of life was necessarily better than that of South Sea islanders. Much of his opposition to imperialism derived from his belief that Western cultures were hardly models worthy of emulation. Melville was strongly influenced by his father’s and brother’s bankruptcies and the misery of the Liverpool slums, which he saw when he visited the port town during his first voyage.¹⁴⁷ In a lecture about the South Seas that he delivered in 1858, Melville would oppose plans to annex Hawaii to the United States. “As for annexation, I beg to offer up an earnest prayer,” he told his audiences, “that the banns of that union should be

¹⁴³ Ibid., 254.

¹⁴⁴ Gerrit P. Judd, ed., *A Hawaiian Anthology* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 62.

¹⁴⁵ Quote from *ibid.*; Ruth Blair, “Melville and Hawaii: Reflections on a New Melville Letter,” *Studies in the Amer. Renaissance* (1995), 236; Forsythe, 101.

¹⁴⁶ John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17.

¹⁴⁷ Kristin Herzog, “Melville, *Typee*, and Missions,” *J. of Presbyterian Hist.* (1982), 165.

forbidden until we have found for ourselves a civilization morally, mentally, and physically higher than the one which has culminated in almshouses, prisons and hospitals.”¹⁴⁸ In *Typee*, Melville had even suggested that Westerners could learn something from South Seas residents. “Four or five Marquesan Islanders sent to the United States as Missionaries,” he noted, “might be quite as useful as an equal number of Americans despatched to the Islands in a similar capacity.”¹⁴⁹

Many Americans felt threatened by Melville’s suggestion that they could learn from the islanders just as the islanders had learned from them. Melville “at times almost loses his loyalty to civilization and the Anglo-Saxon race,” criticized the reviewer for *Graham’s Magazine* (1826–1858) out of Philadelphia.¹⁵⁰ In Hiram Bingham’s opinion, Melville “apologize[s] for cannibalism, and [commends] savage life to the sons and daughters of Christendom, instead of teaching the principles of science and virtue, or the worship of our Maker, among idolaters, man-eaters, and infidels.”¹⁵¹ Yet such critiques are overdrawn. Although the character of Tommo in *Typee* finds much to admire in the islanders’ simplicity and lack of violence, their absence of progress rankles him. The Typee’s lack of advancement, intellectually as well as technically, convinces Tommo that he could never become one of them. “With these unsophisticated savages the history of a day is the history of a life,” he laments.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Blair, 234.

¹⁴⁹ Melville, 125–26. Also quoted in Herzog, “Melville, *Typee*, and Missions,” 161.

¹⁵⁰ Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker, eds., *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Blair, 239.

¹⁵² Melville, 149, also quoted in Richard Ruland, “Melville and the Fortunate Fall: Typee as

In *Typee*, Melville also criticized missionaries' influence. He did not oppose the spread of Christianity in theory—and he had a strong grounding in religion—but he felt that it was seriously flawed in practice.¹⁵³ “No sooner are the images overturned, the temples demolished, and the idolaters converted into *nominal* Christians,” Melville remarked, “than disease, vice, and premature death make their appearance.”¹⁵⁴ This had happened with American Indians, and he did not want it to happen again. “Let heathenism be destroyed, but not by destroying the heathen,” he pleaded. “The Anglo-Saxon hive have extirpated Paganism from the greater part of the North American continent; but with it they have likewise extirpated the greater portion of the Red race.”¹⁵⁵ Melville hoped that these passages would be perceived as constructive criticism and would ultimately benefit “the cause of Christianity in the Sandwich Islands.”¹⁵⁶ His critiques centered on the need for missionaries truly to be good Christians and not to exceed their mission of spreading Christianity. He believed that missionaries had no right to pursue secular changes, such as forcing natives to work hard and introducing firearms.¹⁵⁷ The discrepancy “between the precepts of the New Testament and the practices of the world” would become an enduring theme of Melville’s work.¹⁵⁸

As with Melville’s comments on the comparative merits of Westerners and

Eden,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1968), 320.

¹⁵³ Herzog, 164, 168.

¹⁵⁴ Melville, 195, also quoted in Herzog, 167.

¹⁵⁵ Melville, 195.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 199, also quoted in T. Walter Herbert, Jr., *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 178.

¹⁵⁷ Herzog, 173–74.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 173.

Marquesan islanders, his critiques of missionaries were rejected outright by many critics, though he garnered support from the reliably anti-imperial socialists. A reviewer for New Haven's *New Englander* (1843–1892) considered "All statements made by missionaries" in *Typee* to be "infinitely exaggerated."¹⁵⁹ A writer for the *American Whig Review* (1845–1852), out of New York, deemed Melville's comments about missionaries "prejudiced and unfounded." In New York's socialist *Harbinger* (1845–1849), however, Charles A. Dana noted that Melville did not impugn the missionaries' goal; he "merely avers that their designs have often been injudicious and that other influences than that of the New Testament have operated on the natives, which are undoubtedly the facts."¹⁶⁰

And *Typee* had other supporters. The work sold well and garnered many favorable reviews, which suggests that Melville was not alone in his skepticism of overseas missions and his willingness to reconsider imperial assumptions. Some accounts suggest that "the general public was delighted by the book."¹⁶¹ Charles Fenno Hoffman in the New York *Gazette and Times* considered it "one of the most delightful and well written narratives that ever came from an American pen," and a reviewer for New York's *Illustrated Magazine of Literature and Art* encouraged his readers to "Get it and read it, by all means."¹⁶²

Commercial concerns, however, would lead to a bowdlerization of the text. By the time Rufus Anderson, director of the American Board of Commissioners for

¹⁵⁹ *Contemporary Reviews*, 52.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 35, 41–42.

¹⁶¹ Herbert, 188.

¹⁶² *Contemporary Reviews*, 28, 36.

Foreign Missions, informed publisher John Wiley that he felt “great regret that [*Typee*] bears the respectable name & sanction of your House,” Wiley had already persuaded Melville to excise the anti-missionary portions of the text for its second edition.¹⁶³ The second edition appeared in the fall of 1846 minus many of its salacious passages, other sections offensive to missionaries, and the pro-Paulet appendix.¹⁶⁴ In September 1846, a writer for the *Christian Parlor Magazine*—which had published a scathing review of *Typee* in July—announced that a new edition would be free of the “most objectionable parts of the first edition,” a sign that “the counsels of truth and decency have been regarded.”¹⁶⁵

Many Americans preferred that the Hawaiian islands remain independent—and continue to grant access to all—than for any one power to dominate them. In July 1843, a writer for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* noted that the United States did not want to control Hawaii “but is content with its independent existence.”¹⁶⁶ That same month, a writer for *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* rued a situation in which “any one of the great naval powers” would become “the law-givers and regulators of all commerce in their vicinity.” The islands’ independence, on the contrary, would foster an almost paradisiacal situation. “In neutral hands,” he wrote, “the vessels of all nations meet in harmony upon common ground, with common privileges, and common interests.” Consequently, he believed that “sound policy, as

¹⁶³ Quoted in Herbert, 187.

¹⁶⁴ Blair, 236; Lawrence Buell, “Melville and the Quest of American Decolonization,” *Amer. Lit.* (1992), 220.

¹⁶⁵ *Contemporary Reviews*, 52–57, 61.

¹⁶⁶ “The Sandwich Islands,” *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* (July 1843), 16.

well as justice, dictated that they should remain independent.”¹⁶⁷

And it seemed like independence could work. “During the present year,” the writer for *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* noted, “a Hawaiian ambassador has been received and acknowledged by the government of the United States, and the courts of England, France, and Belgium.” The meetings, he continued, had been so successful that all four nations “have either acknowledged [the islands’] unconditional independence, or have engaged so to do.”¹⁶⁸ Great Britain and France together recognized “the Sandwich Islands as an independent state” and promised “never to take possession [of the islands] either directly or under the title of a protectorate” on November 28, 1843.¹⁶⁹ The United States followed suit on July 6, 1844.¹⁷⁰ Persistent fears of a French takeover, however, kept alive among American policymakers the possibility of annexing the islands. For much of the century, reciprocity treaties provided a kind of economic annexation, though it would not be until the Spanish-American War in 1898 that Hawaii would become a political ward of the United States.¹⁷¹

Although Great Britain saw Hawaii first, commerce and missionary efforts helped the United States gain hegemony in the islands. Some Americans defended both forms of expansion, by urging the government to protect American trade and by asserting that American missionaries were a benefit to Hawaiians. Throughout the era

¹⁶⁷ “The Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (July 1843). 16.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Alexander, 253.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 253–54.

¹⁷¹ Dudden, 60–64, 68.

under review, however, Catholics and socialists were among the Americans more inclined to dwell on the native death toll and the negative effects of commerce and to criticize references to Providence than to celebrate the expansion.

CHAPTER III THE OPIUM WAR, 1839–1842

In a smoke-filled opium den in 1840s Pulo Penang, G. H. Smith, a British surgeon, observed customers reclining on filthy rattans that covered bamboo bedsteads, illuminated by a lamp in the center of the room by which the opium pipes were lighted. Between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., patrons could lie there and pass the pipes between them. Soon their “highly animated” conversation would give way to quieter spells, punctuated by “periodic bursts of loud laughter.” As a man sat by the door to help customers, the addicts’ pulse rates grew slower; they looked with vacant expressions and fell into sleep that lasted several hours.¹

Culled from crimson poppy fields in Turkey and India, opium was a popular medicine in America. It could allay pain, but its best-known role in China was as a debilitating and addictive drug that enticed users with its potential to “drown the recollection of ... cares and troubles.”² Addicts often “would prefer death to exclusion from smoking it,” warned a physician at the time.³ The *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* printed Smith’s harsh and intimate description of an opium den in 1842, just as his country was concluding a war against the Chinese to compel the nation to continue to accept opium, despite its negative effects on users and, consequently, on

¹ G. H. Smith, “Opium Smoking in China,” *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (May 25, 1842), 246–47. The *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* also carried Smith’s account (“Abstract of a paper on Opium smoking in China” [July 1842], 229–33).

² *Ibid.*, 246.

³ “Opium Smoking,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (March 25, 1840), 114–15.

Chinese society.

Americans who analyzed the conflict traced it to the British empire's dependence on opium for profit. The drug could generate revenue like nothing else, and the financial consequence of losing a huge market for the drug—were the Chinese to withdraw—was so dire as to require war. American policymakers, meanwhile, eager for a trade treaty with the Chinese, were chary of appearing to ally with the bellicose British. Instead, they provided minimal protection for resident Yankees during the conflict and waited until afterwards to seek a treaty.

In speaking of the war, politicians tended to criticize the British. In this respect, they were like most stateside Americans, who lambasted the British for ignoring Christian tenets and Chinese law as they forced the government to continue to accept a debilitating drug. American missionaries, merchants, and doctors who were living in China, on the other hand, were more inclined to support the British, partly because they experienced first-hand Chinese methods to crack down on the traffic.

Although most Americans ardently opposed the opium trade that the British were prosecuting, they were unwittingly benefiting from its fortunes. United States trade lacked the structure of the British empire, and was not nearly so awe-inspiring, but it generated huge fortunes nonetheless. Those fortunes buoyed up reform movements at home, as Americans worked to improve the conditions for the poor and the disabled and broadened opportunities for education. And many of the most generous philanthropists, as they ensured the stability, if not the very existence, of schools, churches, hospitals, and universities, had opium profits in their past.

Americans rarely made the connection, either because they saw opium as exclusively a British enterprise or because merchant-philanthropists like Thomas H. Perkins avoided mentioning the drug. Consequently, Americans did not have to balance the benefits of empire against the exploitation of the Chinese. After the war, the United States government provided additional protection for American merchants to sustain a trade whose success partly rested in its unregulated status.

The British East India Company began importing opium from India to China in 1773.⁴ Americans entered the China trade in 1784, when the *Empress of China* sailed from New York to Macao. By the late 1790s, Americans were second only to Great Britain in the China trade. Merchants, however, were plagued by an unfavorable balance of trade and tried to find something that could find a large market in China. Americans soon followed the British by importing opium, the first American shipment arriving from Turkey in 1811. By 1837, the balance of trade had been reversed, and opium constituted an estimated 57 percent of China's imports from all countries.⁵ Although the trade was illegal, the Chinese authorities did not enforce restrictions against it, and many individual Chinese were active participants in the trade.

But the Chinese government began to connect opium with the increase in crime in the country, as well as with the growing unfavorable balance of trade, and

⁴ Carl Seaburg and Stanley Paterson, *Merchant Prince of Boston: Colonel T. H. Perkins, 1764–1854* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 264, and R. B. Forbes, *Remarks on China and the China Trade* (Boston: Samuel N. Dickinson, 1844), 45.

⁵ Thomas N. Layton, *The Voyage of the 'Frolic': New England Merchants and the Opium Trade* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 26–30.

therefore determined that the drug must be eradicated.⁶ In 1839, the Chinese emperor appointed Commissioner Tse-hsü Lin to do away with the drug. Devoted to this goal, Lin compelled foreign merchants to surrender their opium. Lin confined the merchants to their factories for several weeks and confiscated more than twenty thousand chests of the drug. But Britain's opium was produced in India, and loss of China's opium market would so sharply reduce revenue as to devastate economically Great Britain's most important colony. The British government, insisting that they were concerned with Chinese treatment of British merchants, sent warships to China. After two and a half years of skirmishing, the Chinese government capitulated; in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, the British gained access to five treaty ports, though opium would remain illegal until the 1850s. In the Treaty of Wanghia in 1844, the United States acquired the same rights for which the British had fought.⁷

In a series of in-depth articles, writers for *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, a commercial journal based in New York City, blamed the Opium War on Britain's imperial economy, in which the continuing cooperation of Chinese and Indians were crucial to the realization of huge profits. They acknowledged that Americans conducted a small share of the opium trade but saw Great Britain as responsible for whatever negative effect the war might have on America's economy. And they doubted whether Britain's presence in China could truly benefit the Chinese. That

⁶ Ibid., 30.

⁷ Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A study of the Asian opium trade, 1750–1950* (London: Routledge, 1999), 97–100; H. William Brands, *The United States in the World: A History of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), I: 119–21.

presence had grown when the British forced Indians to produce opium and Chinese to consume it, to generate huge amounts of revenue for the empire. In so doing, the British government tethered its empire's fortunes to the sustained cooperation of the two Asian nations. The plan worked unless native forces successfully challenged the system, an eventuality that the British could not allow to occur. "As [the Company's] intercourse with the east was enlarged," observed lawyer and Massachusetts legislator Francis Brinley in April 1841, "they became more and more entangled in the conflict of arms."⁸ Britons would have to go to war "to preserve the equilibrium of the colonial trade," agreed Francis Wharton, a recent Yale graduate who would become an authority on criminal law.⁹ To Wharton, the forced cultivation of opium in India put imperial commerce on "crazy crutches." Not only were the Chinese resisting the trade, but the subcontinent threatened rebellion. To stave off an uprising, Wharton recommended repeal of the "restrictions on East India trade" that had compelled the opium production. A free hand for traders, he believed, was the safest route. "Had the efforts of the merchants of the day been left to themselves," he averred, "those great and crying evils under which India now suffers would never have been forced into existence."¹⁰

Writers for *Hunt's* were aware of American participation in the opium trade

⁸ Francis Brinley, "The English East India Company," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* (April 1841), 307; Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Company, 1965; orig. pub. Philadelphia: Wm. Rutter & Co., 1854), v. 2, 444, Making of America Internet database, University of Michigan (hereafter MOA).

⁹ Francis Wharton, "East India, and the Opium Trade," *Hunt's Merch. Mag.* (January 1841), 10; Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928–1937), v. 20, 27–28, hereafter *DAB*.

¹⁰ Wharton, "East India," 21, 18.

but were more concerned with the Britons' much greater involvement. In December 1840, a writer for the journal included "Turkey opium" among the "importations by the Americans" to China. He stated, however, that the quantity of Turkish opium—which was primarily imported by American traders—was "of small importance" when compared with the Indian product that the British provided.¹¹ Also, *Hunt's* analysts focused on the effects of the war—not the opium trade itself—on the American economy. Because the United States was not a party to the conflict, the writers aimed their criticism at Great Britain. In 1840—the year that he was admitted to the bar—Seeley & Glover law clerk E. W. Stoughton feared that the conflict could cause the "entire suspension, if not utter annihilation," of the United States' "valuable China trade," even though most American merchants in China were "free from the slightest suspicion of having trafficked in the interdicted drug." Concerned with the merchants' interests, Stoughton believed that, "should Great Britain invade the Chinese empire, ... the whole enlightened and christian world ought solemnly to protest against it."¹² Great Britain's potential to destroy all Western trade in China continued to threaten American commerce after the war. "The amount [of opium] which has of late been annually imported, is sufficient to demoralize and ruin upwards of 6,000,000 of people," and "the trade is still increasing," Francis Wharton noted in 1843. "Unless checked, it will in a few years sweep off the fruits from the harvest and the laborer

¹¹ "Commerce of China," *Hunt's Merch. Mag.* (December 1840), 475, 471.

¹² *DAB*, v. 18, 112; E. W. Stoughton, "The Opium Trade—England and China," *Hunt's Merch. Mag.* (May 1840), 386, 405. Stoughton's reference to Americans being "free from the slightest suspicion" of importing opium may be his clever way of implying that Americans were innocent, but he may not have known they were guilty. Writers for *Hunt's* acknowledged American participation in the trade that December by using a document that only became available after Stoughton's article was published (Exec. Doc. 26/1, #248).

from the loom, and thus touch *us* in a part on which, if all others be callous, we will be sure to feel.”¹³

Hunt's writers saw potential benefits to Britain's presence in China, but they were uncertain as to whether the interaction would truly help the Asian nation. Early in 1841 Wharton believed that Anglo-Chinese relations could benefit both parties; company bankers and merchants could bring “gain to themselves” and “blessings” of “Christianity and civilization” to the Chinese. While he hoped that Lin would retain his “authority to enforce ... prohibitory decrees,” he was optimistic that British ambitions would be checked by “the sturdy wisdom which has borne England so far above the wave”¹⁴ Stoughton was less optimistic, as he dwelled on the fact that opium made existence itself “a deep, a dreadful punishment” for addicts and quoted the assertion of an official that “smokers of opium are idle lazy vagrants, having no useful purpose before them, and are unworthy of regard or even of contempt.” Stoughton criticized the Company for becoming involved in opium without “considerations of morality or religion” and Parliament for privileging economic concerns over “morality, justice, and national honor.”¹⁵

The British did not change their ways after the war; their own addiction to opium caused Wharton almost to share Stoughton's pessimism. He dwelled on the situation in its “naked enormity”: “at a time of almost desperation,” East India Company officials had “seize[d]” on opium to “save their commerce from

¹³ Wharton, “China and the Chinese Peace,” *Hunt's Merch. Mag.* (March 1843), 223.

¹⁴ Wharton, “East India,” 17, 22, 21.

¹⁵ Stoughton, 388, 396, 387, 391.

extinction,” even though the result was addicts who ““become hideous to behold, deprived of their teeth, their eyes sunk in their heads in a constant tremor.”” There was “no more glaring violation of the law of nations,” he insisted, “than the successful attempt ... to cram down [China’s] throat, by force, an article which she had deliberately refused to receive.” Yet Wharton maintained that Western influence could be good. He hoped that a broadened commerce would make opium less profitable and that Britain’s presence in Hong Kong would facilitate the spread of “free civilization, and, what is of still higher importance, of Protestant Christianity.”¹⁶

While *Hunt’s* writers analyzed the British empire as a potential threat to American trade, American policymakers focused on ways to secure United States trade with China. On January 7, 1840, on behalf of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Congressman Francis Pickens of South Carolina requested that President Martin Van Buren provide information about “the interests of the people and commerce of the United States, as affected by the recent measures of the Chinese Government for the suppression of the contraband or forcible introduction of opium into China.”¹⁷ The committee’s request came in response to a plea for help from American residents of Canton the previous May. The merchants acknowledged the “extensive opium trade,” which had increased rapidly in recent years—from 3,210 chests imported in 1816–1817 to 23,670 chests by 1832–1833. But they insisted that Lin had overreacted. The commissioner had “made [them] prisoners” in the factories

¹⁶ Wharton, “China and the Chinese Peace,” 223–24, 206, 222, 224, 205, 226.

¹⁷ *DAB*, v. 14, 559–61; *Congressional Globe*, 26th Cong., 1st sess. (Jan. 7, 1840), 172.

and threatened their lives while he confiscated the opium, a “robbery” that lacked “the slightest ground for justification.” The trade had endured “with the knowledge and consent of the chief local authorities” they asserted, and when the Chinese government truly wished “to abolish the trade, they possess[ed] ample power ... to do it effectually.” In their “unprotected state,” the merchants asked for their government—perhaps in concert with European powers—“to establish commercial relations with this empire” and suggested that the Western powers bring “a naval force” to the China coast.¹⁸

Policymakers learned of Americans’ involvement in the opium trade in China from the documents that the House committee requested.¹⁹ But in the China merchants’ May 1839 plea for assistance from the government, most of them promised to “abstain from dealing in the drug.”²⁰ American consul and merchant Peter W. Snow promised the prefect general of Canton that he would “solicit my Government to put a stop to the introduction of opium into the empire in American ships,” and he believed that the Chinese government was satisfied that “Americans in future will not, under any circumstances, engage in the trade.”²¹

In the spring of 1840, Thomas H. Perkins and other Boston area merchants, less agitated than their colleagues in China, asked policymakers not to “interfere in the contest between England and China, or ... enter into any diplomatic arrangement.” Instead, they suggested that the United States send a “national force” that would

¹⁸ 26th Cong., 1st sess., Doc. No. 40, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4.

¹⁹ *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* learned of Americans’ involvement in the trade from these documents (“Commerce of China,” 471).

²⁰ *Cong. Globe*, 26th Cong., 1st sess. (Jan. 7, 1840), 172.

²¹ 26th Cong., 1st sess., Doc. No. 119, 23.

neither negotiate with the Chinese nor participate in the war. Extra encouragement came from Dr. Peter Parker, a popular medical missionary in China who met with Secretary of State-designate Daniel Webster early in 1841. Parker encouraged Webster to send a minister to China “*direct and without delay*” and warned that all foreign trade in China was in jeopardy. Congress heeded these warnings.²² The government sent Commodore Lawrence Kearny, who gained from Chinese authorities a “vague assurance” that Americans would not be discriminated against in foreign trade.²³ “Kearney has notified all whom it concerns,” merchant Warren Delano wrote to his colleague Robert Bennett Forbes on April 8, 1842, “that if they go to smuggling opium in American vessels they must take care of themselves as he will not help them out of scrapes, if they get into any.” Delano later noted that Kearny got along well with the Chinese and believed that the commodore’s visit “will be productive of good to us here.”²⁴ When Great Britain opened the five new ports to trade, Kearny worked to get the same privilege for Americans.²⁵ Not until December 30, 1842, after the Opium War had ended, did President John Tyler ask Congress to “make appropriations for the compensation of a commissioner to reside in China” to protect

²² Raymond F. Wylie, “American Diplomacy in China, 1843–1857: The Evolution of a Policy,” in Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel, and Hilary Conroy, eds., *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1991), 91–92; 26th Cong., 1st sess., Doc. No. 170, 2; *The Papers of Daniel Webster: Diplomatic Papers, Volume 1, 1841–1843*, ed. Kenneth E. Shewmaker (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1983), 879; quote 885; 887.

²³ Daniel Webster, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1903), ser. 3, v. 1, 878.

²⁴ Warren Delano (WD), Macao, to Robert Bennet Forbes (RBF), April 8, 1842; WD, Canton, to RBF, May 12, 1842. Warren Delano Papers (WDP), Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Library.

²⁵ *DAB*, v. 10, 271.

American citizens and represent the United States to the Chinese government.²⁶

During the conflict, policymakers who spoke of it tended to oppose the British. In March 1840, Congressman Caleb Cushing—whose family was involved in the China trade, and who would head the 1844 delegation to China—criticized rumored plans for Americans to join “heart and hand with the British Government” to gain a commercial treaty with the Asian nation. Instead he believed that a United States representative could “put the American trade with China on a just and stable footing” by contrasting Americans’ “proper respect” for Chinese law with the Britons’ “outrageous misconduct.” Congressman Pickens assured Cushing that he had no intention of “mak[ing] common cause with England in her designs in China” or of helping to “forc[e] on the Chinese the odious traffic in opium.”²⁷ In the Senate that same month, John C. Calhoun criticized the British for planning “to wage war on this venerable and peaceful people” to “force a poisonous drug down the throats of an entire nation,” against its government’s wishes.²⁸

The most notable exception among congressional responses to the conflict came from John Quincy Adams, who had already served as president and was now a Massachusetts congressman. In December 1840, Adams stated his belief that “the *true* ground of war” between Britain and China was Chinese insistence that other nations recognize China’s superiority.²⁹ Throughout the war, Adams maintained his belief

²⁶ Webster Papers, ser. 3, v. 1, 878; James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789–1902* (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1905), v. 4, 214.

²⁷ *Cong. Globe*, 26th Cong., 1st sess. (March 16, 1840), 275.

²⁸ John C. Calhoun, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1959–99), v. 15, 154; “Congress,” *Emancipator* (March 19, 1840), 187.

²⁹ *Cong. Globe*, 26th Cong., 2d sess., 28–29.

that Chinese haughtiness, not the opium trade, was the primary cause of the conflict. Responses to his assertions indicate how unpopular his view was. In a lecture to the Massachusetts Historical Society in November 1841, Adams insisted that opium was no more the cause of the conflict "than the overthrowing of the tea in the Boston Harbor was the cause of the North American Revolution."³⁰ Instead, he argued, the cause was "the Ko-tow! the arrogant and insupportable pretension of China, that she will hold commercial intercourse ... not upon terms of equal reciprocity, but upon the insulting and degrading forms of the relation between lord and vassal." Commerce was, he insisted, "among the natural rights and duties of men." Invoking the "Christian precept to love your neighbour as yourself," Adams explained that commerce was the best way by which "men can ... contribute to the comfort and well-being of one another."³¹

Toward the end of his lecture, Adams suggested that his listeners had "perhaps been surprised" to hear him defend Great Britain.³² They probably were surprised, but few were persuaded. Adams's stance was sufficiently unpopular for John Gorham Palfrey, who had already accepted Adams's paper for publication in the *North American Review*, to withdraw his offer.³³ A writer for the Baptist *Christian Watchman* (1819–1906) provided tepid support for Adams's assertions: "coming

³⁰ Adams quoted in Geoffrey C. Ward and Frederic Delano Grant, Jr., "A Fair, Honorable, and Legitimate Trade," *American Heritage* (August–September 1986), 57.

³¹ Adams quoted in Walter LaFeber, ed., *John Quincy Adams and American Continental Empire: Letters, Papers, and Speeches* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 51, 50, 49.

³² *Ibid.*, 50.

³³ Ward and Grant, 57. Paul C. Nagel is reaching when he portrays Adams's speech as a success (Nagel, *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997], 383–84). Jacques M. Downs, "Fair Game: Exploitive Role-Myths and the American Opium Trade," *Pacific Historical Review* 41 (1972), 144–45.

from so profound a statesman,” he wrote, “they are worthy of respectful consideration.”³⁴ Although “W. A.,” a writer for the Unitarian *Christian Examiner* (1824–1869)—which tended to oppose the British in the conflict—agreed that Adams’s “learning and experience demands that his views should be calmly considered,” he also believed that “the respect due to truth and humanity demands that they should be opposed.” W. A. then spent the better part of a forty-page article refuting each of Adams’s assertions. He considered it illogical for Adams to hold a non-Christian people to Christian precepts and ironic for Adams to accuse the Chinese of cultural pretensions, when his own perspective was molded by “the prejudices of European and American civilization.” Insisting that “We have no right to force our commerce upon a nation, ... any more than they have to impose conditions on us,” the writer was not appeased by predictions that the war could result in a Christianized China. “I have no faith,” he stated, “in the promotion of morality by immoral means.”³⁵

During the war, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* suggested that American interest in the Opium War would not be intense, because “Ocean and continent are bad conductors.”³⁶ Many Americans did follow events in China, but ocean and continent did possess an insulating quality. The contrast between the opinions of Americans remote from the situation and the cold realism of their counterparts in

³⁴ “The British and Chinese War,” *Christian Watchman* [Boston] (Dec. 3, 1841), 194.

³⁵ W. A., “Great Britain and China,” *Christian Examiner* [Boston and New York] (July 1842), 281, 290, 282, 298, 318.

³⁶ “The Opium War, and its Justice,” *Chr. Exam.* (May 1841), 235.

Canton and Macao remind us that it is easier to surrender other people's fortunes than to surrender our own. Also, few stateside commentators considered the trade's economic and social benefits to the Western world—and the dislocation that would follow its dismantling—and therefore sidestepped the question of *how badly* they wanted the opium trade to cease. With only hypothetical control, their opposition is not necessarily impressive. Had they been more directly influenced by the trade, they may have acted more similarly to their counterparts in China than they would care to admit. Americans in China carried on the trade but justified it and distanced themselves from responsibility for it.

Although members of the religious community in the United States and China opposed the opium trade, their attitudes toward the British presence in China ranged from strong opposition to strong support. Those who were involved in missionary work were more likely than those who were not to support the British during the war, both because their commitment to bringing the Gospel to China made them less critical of the means for bringing it about and because their first-hand exposure to restrictions on foreigners sparked anti-Chinese sentiment. Missionaries were far more likely than Americans back home to interpret the conflict as God's way of opening the country to Christianity and to assert that religion's blessings outweighed opium's ills. And they were more inclined to publicize misogynistic practices in China, to emphasize the need for a strong Western presence.

"When has a Christian and civilized nation been engaged in a more disgraceful enterprise!" was the reaction of the Congregationalist *Boston Recorder*

(1816–1906) to the opium trade.³⁷ This reaction was typical of the religious community at home. It was certainly true of writers for journals that tended to support the Chinese. While a writer for the *Friend*—which did not address missionary work and strongly opposed all wars—was amazed that “men of correct moral sensibilities, and enlightened minds should be so blinded ... as to engage in this business,” a writer for the *Christian Examiner* believed that the nation that was “foremost in the great duty of christianizing the world” should not “[poison] a whole people” “for purposes of national aggrandizement.” Britain’s control of Ireland inclined Catholic sources to oppose the British empire. “What cause of grievance the British originally had, does not so clearly appear,” penned a writer for the *Catholic Telegraph* in the spring of 1840. “They smuggled opium contrary to law, and the Chinese destroyed it.”³⁸

Missionaries in China also disapproved of the opium trade. The Reverend David Abeel admitted that the traffic had grown to “a frightful magnitude” and spoke of “the evils of the vice.”³⁹ He also knew that opium would not necessarily help the missionary cause. He considered it “one of the most appalling obstacles to our missionary exertions,” due to the difficulty in converting addicts, and he rejected merchants’ assertions that it was a “harmless luxury.”⁴⁰ The Reverend Samuel Wells Williams saw the trade as an exchange of money for “death and disease” and was

³⁷ “England and China,” *Boston Recorder* (July 10, 1840), 110.

³⁸ “The Opium Trade in China,” *Friend* (Feb. 29, 1840); “The Opium War, and its Justice,” 228–29; “Late and Important from China,” *Catholic Telegraph* (March 28, 1840), 103.

³⁹ Rev. G. R. Williamson, *Memoir of the Rev. David Abeel, D.D., Late Missionary to China* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972; orig. pub. New York: Robert Carter, 1848), 181, 195.

⁴⁰ Quoted in “British India, Opium, and China,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (November 1840), 273. Also appeared in “China:—Letter from the Missionaries,” *Missionary Herald at Home* (August 1840), 320.

chagrined when the war led to what he considered to be “unjust” trade talks.

Although he believed that “we shall find very few expeditions that have not had a good deal to find fault with in them,” he worried that a treaty would only bring more opium into the country.⁴¹

The Opium War occurred during a surge of religious zeal in America known as the Second Great Awakening, in which Baptist ministers worked crowds up into a frenzy at revivals and camp meetings and Methodist circuit riders turned their Protestant denomination into the nation’s largest.⁴² This era also saw strong enthusiasm for bringing the Gospel to China, though the religious community was split as to whether the benefit of opening China to Christianity outweighed opium’s ills. After the war, a writer for the *Catholic Telegraph* reported the “delightful” news that the Chinese emperor would “permit missionaries free entrance, and right of travelling without obstacle through his dominions.”⁴³ But during the conflict, only those who were closely involved in missionary pursuits interpreted the war as the will of God and suggested that the end could justify the means. In 1840, the Reverend Elijah Bridgman, who ten years earlier had become the first American missionary in China, trusted that “the God of nations is about to open a highway for those who will preach the word” and insisted that he could not “for one moment entertain the idea

⁴¹ “China:—Letter from Mr. Williams,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (December 1839), 464; Frederick Wells Williams, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Wells Williams, LL.D.* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1972; orig. pub. New York: G. P. Putnum’s Sons, 1889), 122.

⁴² George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 308–10.

⁴³ “Foreign Ecclesiastical Intelligence,” *Cath. Tel.* (April 8, 1843), 108.

that China is to be closed like Japan.”⁴⁴ And a writer for the Congregationalist *Missionary Herald at Home* wrote of China and “the changes which the providence of God seems to be working in that part of the world.”⁴⁵ Meanwhile, writers for publications that were not connected with missionary work—such as the *Christian Examiner*—insisted that “although God may turn evil to good, the character of evil and of the evil-doer remains unchanged.”⁴⁶

Writers for missionary journals insisted that China was better off after the war than before. “Without looking to the cause of the war, or inquiring into its merits in any respect,” penned a writer for the *Boston Recorder*—which emphasized missionary work in its reporting—“it becomes Christians to rejoice that it is ended, and to consider well its results”—most importantly, China’s greater accessibility to missionaries.⁴⁷ And in the pages of *Zion’s Herald and Wesleyan Journal* (1823–1910) a Methodist weekly, the Reverend Dr. William J. Boone said “that the British war has resulted in good, and will promote generally the advancement of the missionary enterprise.”⁴⁸ Some writers insisted that China was better off after the war by characterizing the nation as an aloof person who has joined a circle of friends. Early in the conflict, a writer for the *Missionary Herald at Home* stated that China existed in an “insulated, self-confident, haughty, insulting posture,” and a writer for the

⁴⁴ Webster Papers, ser. 3, v. 1, 878. Quoted in “Other Societies:—American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: China,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (February 1841), 52.

⁴⁵ “China,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (March 1842), 100.

⁴⁶ W. A., “Great Britain and China,” 318.

⁴⁷ “The Opening of China,” *Bos. Rec.* (Feb. 2, 1843), 17; Jean Hoonstra and Trudy Heath, eds., *American Periodicals, 1741–1900* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1979), 67.

⁴⁸ “Missions in China,” *Zion’s Herald* [Boston] (Nov. 29, 1843), 190; Rev. Cornelius Walker, D.D., *The Life and Correspondence of Rev. William Sparrow, D.D.* (Philadelphia: James Hammond, 1876), 254 (MOA).

Princeton Review insisted that "The national arrogance of the Chinese is excessive."

The conflict, according to the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, brought China "into friendly relations with the rest of mankind."⁴⁹ Like John Quincy Adams, these writers presented international involvement as each nation's duty. Although such justifications found support among those for whom China's opening was crucial—such as those with ties to missionaries and maritime trade—few others were willing to accept such use of force.

Writers who opposed Great Britain or whose journals lacked a focus on missionary work were less optimistic. In Cincinnati's *Catholic Telegraph*, the Reverend John Pierpont asserted that Great Britain's and the United States' "wars for conquest" and "poisonous drugs" did more "to desolate God's earth ... than is done by all other nations, Christian, Mahommedan and Pagan combined."⁵⁰ A concerned Quaker agreed. "We have little reason to wonder at the reluctance of China to extend her intercourse with foreigners," he admitted in the *Friend*. Trade had brought the nation "pestilence, poverty, crime and disturbance."⁵¹

Writers for missionary journals publicized Chinese practices—particularly misogynistic ones—that Americans would deem outrageous, to emphasize the need for a strong Western presence in China. A writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* reported that a Chinese man could beat his wife with impunity as long as he did not "break her limbs or maim her," and many writers noted the common practice of

⁴⁹ "Mission to China," *Miss. Her. at Home* (January 1840), 11; "China," *Princeton Review* (April 1839), 151; "American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions," *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (August 1843), 202.

⁵⁰ "Great Britain and the United States," *Cath. Tel.* (July 25, 1840), 236.

⁵¹ "The Opium Trade in China," *Friend* (Feb. 29, 1840); Hoornstra and Heath, 89.

female infanticide.⁵² In 1839, “Sigma Pi Nolens” informed readers of *Zion’s Herald* that “the thousands of infants who perish, ... utter a cry ... which echoes and re-echoes, ... ‘COME OVER AND HELP US!’”⁵³ Other commentators characterized China as a violated woman. As mentioned earlier, Francis Wharton referred to the Britons’ importation of opium into a female China as “cram[ming] down her throat, by force, an article which she had deliberately refused to receive.” Similarly, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* referred to the British “forcing [opium] down the throats of the Chinese.”⁵⁴ Other observers may have counted Chinese men among the females whom the West must save. The *Boston Recorder* quoted a reference to “the enfeebled Opium eaters of Assam” as being “more effeminate than women.” The notion that opium was decimating China’s reserve of “manly” men who could support their families strengthened the argument for Western assistance.⁵⁵

Missionaries in China frequently criticized the natives for their restrictions on foreigners. “So complete is the imprisonment,” the Reverend Samuel Wells Williams noted of confinement in 1839, “that no provisions enter the factories, and 300 people are threatened with starvation unless they give up one of their number to the Chinese.”⁵⁶ He also criticized Lin for making no “distinction at any time between those who traded [in opium] and those who have not.”⁵⁷ In an April 1841 letter,

⁵² “The Condition of Heathen Females,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (February 1840), 35. See also “Condition of Females in China,” *Bos. Rec.* (April 3, 1840), 53; “Infanticide in China,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (April 1844), 138–41; and “China:—Journal of Mr. Abeel,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (June 1844), 194.

⁵³ Sigma Pi Nolens, “Mission to China,” *Zion’s Herald* (Oct. 9, 1839), 12.

⁵⁴ Wharton, “China and the Chinese Peace,” 205; “The Opium War, and Its Justice,” 229.

⁵⁵ “Effects of the Opium Trade,” *Bos. Rec.* (Nov. 20, 1840), 188.

⁵⁶ Williams, 114.

⁵⁷ “China:—Letter from Mr. Williams,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (December 1839), 464.

Bridgman recalled how the foreign community “was held in strict imprisonment, and all escape prevented by thousands of armed men” and insisted that the British had displayed “Great moderation and magnanimity” in China.⁵⁸ In August of that year, he criticized Chinese “harshness” toward the British and considered Lin to have done his job poorly, due to his “ignorance and the conceit that accompanies ignorance.”⁵⁹ And after the Chinese abducted a British missionary in the summer of 1840, the Reverend J. Lewis Shuck insisted that although he “deprecate[d] war in all its forms,” he considered “the Chinese *government*” as “essentially and practically hostile, to the great God and to the cause of his Son, and it would be no great cause of regret to me were the whole fabric soon to fall, to rise no more, before the face of offended heaven.”⁶⁰

America’s religious community back home saw some fault on the Chinese side but was far less inclined to side with Britain. When missionary David Abeel described a conflict between the British and Chinese and expressed hope that the episode would be “of much importance to the progress of the Redeemer’s kingdom,” the editor of the *Catholic Telegraph* preceded the report with a caveat: “Mr. Abeel writes under the influence of some prejudice against the Chinese, which prevents him from rendering full justice to their efforts for the suppression of the deadly trade in opium.”⁶¹ A writer for the Baptist *Christian Watchman* asserted that the Chinese had “employed a barbarous and unjustifiable mode of executing their laws” but believed

⁵⁸ “China,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (November 1841), 471, 472.

⁵⁹ Williams, 116, 115.

⁶⁰ “China:—Letter of Mr. Shuck,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (April 1841), 91.

⁶¹ “Foreign: New by the Taralinta: China,” *Cath. Tel.* (March 7, 1840), 75.

that they had been “more sinned against than sinning” in the conflict.⁶² And writers for the *Christian Examiner* agreed that the Chinese would benefit from hearing “the sound of the gospel” from Protestant or Catholic missionaries⁶³ but criticized the British for “poisoning a whole people” with a “pernicious” and forbidden drug, “for purposes of national aggrandizement.”⁶⁴

The American medical community also produced varying opinions on the war, with physicians at home describing opium’s dangers while medical missionaries in China focused on the advance of Christianity. While the Chinese were fighting to keep opium out of their nation, Americans were taking the drug—and doctors were prescribing it—for a variety of ailments. *Jahr’s New Manual of Homeopathic Practice*, which was published in New York in 1842, recommended opium for various ailments, with most prescriptions appealing to the drug’s sedative effects. According to the manual’s editor, Dr. Gerald Hull, afflictions that opium could assuage included “*inability to go to sleep*,” “*fits at night or in the evening*,” “*a violent SHOCK*,” “*tearing pains in the head*,” “*frightful visions, of mice, scorpions, &c.*,” and nightmares accompanied by “*suspended respiration, eyes half open, open mouth, snoring, rattling, features expressive of anguish, face covered with cold*”

⁶² “War in China,” *Chr. Watch*. (Jan. 15, 1841), 9.

⁶³ “Malcom’s Travels,” *Chr. Exam.* (July 1839), 387. This article addresses the sense of competition between Protestant and Catholic missionaries in China. Protestants worried that Catholics had the lead. See “The Opening of China,” *Bos. Rec.* (Feb. 2, 1843), 17; “China:—Letter from Mr. Bridgman,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (March 1843), 119; “American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions,” *Bap. Miss Mag.* (August 1843), 202; “China:—Journal of Mr. Abeel,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (December 1843), 452; and “Medhurst’s China,” *Cath. Tel.* (Jan. 18, 1840), 19.

⁶⁴ “The Opium War, and its Justice,” 229, 225, 224, 229.

perspiration.”⁶⁵

Hull assured his readers that “This medicine is especially suitable to old persons, and sometimes also to children,”⁶⁶ but while the Opium War raged the American medical community was debating the drug’s danger to people of all ages. In medical journals including the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* (1827–1924) articles that recommended opium as a cure⁶⁷ were interspersed with warnings about adulterated opium, which could kill those who ingested it;⁶⁸ overdoses of a tincture of opium called laudanum;⁶⁹ and accounts of children who had died from the drug.⁷⁰ While a pharmacist in the *American Journal of Pharmacy* (1835–1907) warned readers against prescribing Godfrey’s cordial, a popular elixir for children that contained opium,⁷¹ writers for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* worried about the adult population, insisting that, despite opium’s “infinite value” in treating some cases of delirium tremens, the authors had “witnessed so much evil from its indiscriminate and exclusive use.”⁷²

Other Americans were aware of the threat of addiction. Although “the opium taker” could initially derive “sufficient excitement” from a small quantity of the drug,

⁶⁵ A. Gerald Hull, M.D., ed., *Jahr’s New Manual of Homeopathic Practice* (New York: William Radde, 1842), v. II, 176, 42, 82, 211, 176, 111 (MOA).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, v. II, 143.

⁶⁷ “On the Treatment of Acute Rheumatism by Opium,” *Amer. J. of the Med. Sci.* [Philadelphia] (May 1840), 203–04; “Williams on Dysentery,” *Amer. J. of the Med. Sci.* (January 1842), 127–31; “Watery Solution of Opium in Venereal Excrescences,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (April 8, 1840), 146.

⁶⁸ C. Ellis, “Note on Adulterated Opium,” *American Journal of Pharmacy* (July 1845), 94.

⁶⁹ “Death by an Over Dose of Opium,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (May 22, 1841), 320–21; “Case of Poisoning with Opium,” *Amer. J. of the Med. Sci.* (August 1840), 508.

⁷⁰ “Minute quantity of Opium destructive to the life of a child,” *Amer. J. of the Med. Sci.* (July 1842), 223; “Efficacy of Electricity in a case of Poisoning by Laudanum,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (May 17, 1843), 305–06; “On the effects of Opium to the Infant Subject,” *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery* (February 1844), 157–58.

⁷¹ C. Ellis, “Patent Medicines,” *Amer. J. of Pharm.* [Philadelphia] (April 1839), 70–71.

⁷² “Treatment of Delirium Tremens without Opium,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Dec. 25, 1839), 327.

a writer for the *Southern Literary Messenger* informed his readers in 1841, “it requires rapidly to be increased to produce the same effect; and the wretched victim ... clings [to the drug], with increasing devotion, as his system becomes more torpid.”⁷³ Withdrawal could bring “vomiting, stomach cramps, and excruciating pains in the head and limbs, ... extreme nervousness, fits of uncontrollable weeping, fear, shame, anger, and dreadful nightmares.”⁷⁴ In 1838, three weeks in a Baltimore hospital left John Lofland—a writer and friend of Edgar Allan Poe—“almost blind from loss of sleep.” Lofland was being treated for laudanum addiction. He had initially taken the drug to cure a “violent cramp-colic,” and subsequent doses for subsequent attacks left him addicted. “My limbs jerked violently; cramps seized me in every limb, my nerves crawled like worms,” he recalled of the withdrawal period. Unable to bear the symptoms any longer, Lofland escaped from the hospital and found a druggist. Within an hour, he had consumed eight ounces of laudanum.⁷⁵

Many Americans had first learned of opium’s dangers by reading Thomas de Quincey’s book *Confessions of an Opium-Eater*, a stark depiction of addiction that had appeared in 1821 and was popular enough to be reprinted several times. Opium gave de Quincey “a brief period of ecstatic pleasure,” Lucy Aldrich would note in the *Ladies’ Repository* (1841–1876).⁷⁶ But several months after he gave up the drug, de

⁷³ “Reflections Suggested by the French Revolution,” *Southern Literary Messenger* (September 1841), 612 (MOA).

⁷⁴ Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840–1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 10.

⁷⁵ John Lofland, *The Poetical and Prose Writings of Dr. John Lofland, The Milford Bard* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1853), 11, 14; John Moncure Daniel, “Edgar Allan Poe,” *South. Lit. Mess.* (March 1850), 178 (MOA).

⁷⁶ Lucy Aldrich, “De Quincey,” *Ladies’ Repository* [New York] (November 1860), 670 (MOA).

Quincey wrote, he still felt “agitated, throbbing, palpitating, [and] shattered.”⁷⁷

A reviewer of de Quincey’s book for the *North American Review* dismissed the idea that Americans would “abandon themselves to the use of opium as a luxury.”⁷⁸ But in February 1839, the editor of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* insisted that “The secret consumers of opium in the United States are vastly more numerous than is suspected” and that opium-eating was particularly prevalent among the rich, who could afford to “gratify the propensity without restraint.” He commended the *Chinese Repository* for offering a prize for the best essay on the opium trade’s “commercial, political and moral” effects and hoped that the winning entry would be widely circulated.⁷⁹

A year later, Dr. Daniel J. Macgowan informed a New York physicians’ temperance society that “at least between 3000 and 5000 persons in [New York] ... habitually used opium in substance, or some of its preparations,” a warning that appeared in the *New-York Evangelist* (1830–1902).⁸⁰ Macgowan cautioned his audience that, if Commissioner Lin banned opium in China, “the followers of the prophet would find a market for their staple poison on our own shores.”⁸¹ In a later speech to the same group, he noted that “unhappy people are suffering from British opium” and added that the drug’s enticements made it “more likely ... to endure than

⁷⁷ De Quincey quoted in “The Chemistry of Common Life,” *Ladies’ Repos.* (May 1855), 292 (MOA).

⁷⁸ “Confessions of an Opium-Eater,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (January 1824), 92, also quoted in H. Wayne Morgan, *Drugs in America: A Social History, 1800–1980* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 6.

⁷⁹ “Premium Essay on the Opium Trade,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Feb. 13, 1839), 18–19.

⁸⁰ “Medical Temperance Meeting,” *New-York Evangelist*, March 7, 1840.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* The speech also appeared in *Christian Secretary*, March 13, 1840.

the most terrific pestilence.”⁸²

But medical missionaries in China were less concerned with opium than were their stateside counterparts and were more inclined to focus on the missionary work at hand. In November 1842, after the war, Macgowan left New York for China, to work as a physician and Baptist missionary.⁸³ Six months later he coauthored a letter from Hong Kong, in which he and his colleagues alluded to the greater accessibility to China since the war and proclaimed that “God, in his wise providences, has effected mighty changes in this hitherto sealed country.”⁸⁴ And the aforementioned Dr. Peter Parker, who ran an Ophthalmic Hospital in Canton, regarded the war “not so much as an opium or an English affair, as a great design of Providence to make the wickedness of man subserve his purposes of mercy towards China.”⁸⁵ Parker’s hospital did not exist solely to cure ailing Chinese. Many Americans saw it as a lure in opening up China to Christianity and trade. The hospital attracted Chinese who shied away from religious instruction. Many Chinese were willing to “forego their prejudices” and “accept assistance, wherever they can find it,” the Medical Missionary Society in China explained in a published address. The society admitted that the hospital was not “the most direct and appropriate manner of introducing the gospel to a heathen

⁸² Daniel J. Macgowan, M.D., *Claims of the Missionary Enterprise on the Medical Profession* (New York: William Osborn, 1842), 11. The temperance movement’s connection to opium was ironic; in places where opium use declined, the use of alcohol increased, and vice versa. See “Items of Intelligence: Opium,” *Bos. Rec.* (June 21, 1839), 98; William B. Tappan, “Opium,” *Liberator* (April 10, 1840), 60; “Other Societies:—American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Siam,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (November 1841), 331; and “Use of Opium,” *Western Lancet* (November 1842), 328, referred to in Morgan, 7.

⁸³ “Departure of a Missionary to China,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (December 1842), 341.

⁸⁴ “American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (December 1843), 316.

⁸⁵ “Recent Intelligence,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (January 1841), 43. Parker’s quote also appeared in “Other Societies:—American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: China,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (February 1841), 52.

people” but asserted that it was “likely to open one avenue through which some of the blessings of Christianity may flow ... while all other avenues are fast closed against it.”⁸⁶

Contributors to medical journals praised Parker for curing ailments in China, but financial support from British and American audiences tended to be conditional. During Parker’s fund-raising tour in 1841 and 1842, a committee in Liverpool, England, “deemed it best to delay taking any steps till, at all events, *a partial opening of the China trade should be heard of.*” Like the Liverpoolians, New Yorkers had a society inform Parker that it was not yet the right time to provide funds, and one \$50 contribution constituted Parker’s entire take from Philadelphia. The striking exception was Boston, where Parker amassed “*five thousand five hundred and fifty dollars!*”⁸⁷ Rather than signifying a striking generosity, Boston’s support may suggest a different approach to currying favor with the Chinese. Two years earlier, a writer for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* had explained that part of the purpose of Parker’s hospital was to raise the United States “in the confidence and esteem of the Chinese, which will tend to put our commerce ... upon a more desirable footing.”⁸⁸ While other cities chose the stick, Boston chose the carrot. And the Chinese did approve of the hospital. In July 1839, two of Commissioner Lin’s deputies discussed the conflict with the doctor, and Lin asked him for medical advice, including how to cure opium addicts.⁸⁹ In 1842, Parker was able to avoid being harmed during a

⁸⁶ “Medical Missionary Society in China,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (March 1839), 113.

⁸⁷ “Medical Missionary Hospital in China,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Jan. 24, 1844), 506.

⁸⁸ “Medical Missionary Society in China,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Jan. 30, 1839), 416.

⁸⁹ “Dr. Parker,” *Bos. Med. and Surg. J.* (Feb. 19, 1840), 34.

Canton riot because someone told the crowd that Parker was “the doctor—a good man.”⁹⁰

Like the religious and medical communities, those who focused on economics produced a spectrum of responses to the Opium War, and again, those who were most closely connected to events in China were least inclined to support the Chinese. The business community, however, was also quite leery of the British. As future chapters will reinforce, working-class Americans tended to be quite hostile to imperialism, and during the Opium War they questioned Britain’s right to rule over the Chinese. In the working-class journal the *Radical* (1841–1848) editor George H. Evans—who was also a land reformer and an atheist—noted that “British mercenaries” had “butchered from five to ten thousands of the Chinese, compelled the Chinese government to take British opium, and to pay six millions of pounds sterling and the expenses of their resistance to Victoria’s modest demand. So much for the progress of tyranny!”⁹¹

Working women also took issue with the empire, as shown by Harriet Farley, a factory girl in Lowell, Massachusetts, who hoped that Queen Victoria, as a woman, would show restraint and mercy as a ruler. In October 1842, just after the conclusion of the Opium War, the *Lowell Offering* (1840–1845) published a poem in which Farley pleaded with the empress to reconsider the vastness of her empire:

I read of wars, so vast and proud
Say, are they always just?

⁹⁰ Quoted in “China:—Letter from Doct. Parker,” *Miss. Her. at Home* (June 1843), 257. Mrs. Parker’s account of the incident appears in “Interesting Letter from China,” *Bos. Rec.* (April 27, 1843), 68.

⁹¹ G.H.E., “British Tyranny,” *Radical* [New York] (November 1841), 176; *DAB*, v. 6, 201.

Are those whose necks thy warriors bowed,
Those who *should* kiss the dust.

I read of those by wrongs oppressed
Beneath a woman's sway:
Lady, could not thy kind behest
Change their sad lot? Oh, say!

Methinks thou art not ruler there;
I see the statesman's guile;
In all that speaks of regal care,
There's diplomatic wile. ...

There's better far than pomp or state
To claim a sovereign's care—
Goodness should always make her great,
And kindness makes her fair.

Let oft thy words repeated be—
Traced once in lines of light—
"Speak to me not of policy,
But tell me, is it right?"⁹²

The fact that Farley, a working-class woman, was interested enough in British imperialism to develop opinions on its justice and compose a poem on the subject suggests that the portion of Americans who followed international events—even events in which the United States was not involved—may be greater than is currently believed. It also indicates that Farley's reading material consisted of something more substantive than *Godey's Lady's Book*. Farley served as editor of the *Lowell Offering* and was considered its "most articulate writer."⁹³ And she spoke her mind, as evidenced several years later when she encountered an international event that *did* affect her. When immigrant women began working in the mills, Farley noted that "the

⁹² H. F., "Factory Blossoms for Queen Victoria," *Lowell Offering* [Lowell, Mass.] (October 1842), 1–3.

⁹³ Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826–1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 124.

introduction of foreign laborers” caused “the greatest dissatisfaction, among American operatives.”⁹⁴

Americans who followed the conflict from home yet felt an economic connection to the situation were torn between opposing the Chinese and opposing the British. Jane Wigglesworth is a good example. The wife of a China merchant, she corresponded from Boston with China merchant Augustine Heard. Her opinions are typical of those who found themselves caught in the middle: she found the war and its combatants distasteful but believed that the outcome would benefit everybody. “Should the English get firm footing in China, it will I have no doubt, eventually be for the greater good of the Chinese,” she wrote to Heard in Canton in April 1842. “But dreadful are the means made use of for bringing it about.”⁹⁵ After the war, her ambivalence remained. She regarded the Chinese as “a people with whom magnanimity is a strange word,” but deemed British conduct toward them “deeply reprehensible.” “The English are a wonderful people,” she mused. “What nation on earth contains so much intellect, is the occasion of so much good? What nation on earth is in some respects, so deeply despicable?”⁹⁶

Farmers were also torn. Although a writer for the *American Farmer* (1819–1897) considered the war to have been “conceived in iniquity and brought forth in sin” and therefore could not “wish success to the authors of it,”⁹⁷ writers for that journal and others dreamed of the China market and of the opportunity to learn from

⁹⁴ Quoted in Dublin, 153.

⁹⁵ Jane Wigglesworth, Boston, to Augustine Heard, Canton, April 28, 1842. Heard Papers, Baker Library, Harvard Business School.

⁹⁶ Jane Wigglesworth, Boston, to Augustine Heard, August 1843. Heard Papers.

⁹⁷ “Latest from Europe,” *Amer. Farmer* [Baltimore] (Oct. 21, 1840), 175.

the Chinese, who had attained “the highest degree of perfection” in agriculture. Consequently, they saw a silver lining to the conflict, were the British able to open the country wide. Some farmers revealed their contempt for the Chinese when they predicted that, once they acquired Chinese know-how, they could beat them at their own game—and successfully challenge the British empire.

Chinese fields—in a “high state of cultivation” and typical of the nation—helped a westerner in China in 1845 understand Chinese aloofness from the world. With its “endless internal agricultural wealth,” he wrote, “some slight idea may be formed of the Chinese empire, and the little concern the Emperor ... has been accustomed to bestow on foreign nations, their commerce, trade, or anything else concerning them.”⁹⁸ Other Western observers concurred that Chinese agriculture was second to none. “How far in the rear is our agriculture still, when compared with the Chinese,” lamented a Frenchman, whose article appeared in Richmond’s the *Southern Planter* (1841–1906) while a botanist insisted that “it was impossible to find in a Chinese field of grain, one single weed.”⁹⁹

Centuries of Chinese farming knowledge, however, had remained unwritten, and therefore required first-hand observation. For this reason, farmers supported attempts to open China to learn the people’s agricultural techniques. With that knowledge, they could compete. The French observer believed that the Chinese still held the lead in agriculture. But he noted that in the previous fifty years, Westerners had learned enough from the Chinese “to equal them in many arts, and to surpass

⁹⁸ “Chinese Cultivation and Implements,” *Western Farmer and Gardener* (June 1845), 252.

⁹⁹ H. Meigs, trans., “Manures,” *Southern Planter* (March 1845), 57.

them.”¹⁰⁰ American farmers echoed the assertion. A writer for Cincinnati’s *Western Farmer and Gardener* (1839–1845) asserted that Americans could cultivate tea at least as well as “the ‘stupid Chinese’” and suggested that “some of our wealthy capitalists commence a trial of” tea culture in America.¹⁰¹ Newbell Puckett, an avid proponent of tea culture, insisted that North Carolinians could cultivate a “superior article” to that of the “silly Chinese” and added, with regard to Chinese harvesting methods, “I can gather more in a fortnight than he can in a year.”¹⁰² And in 1841, after Shadrach Cate observed that “there are many inquiries respecting the gathering and drying of native American tea,” a *Southern Planter* writer added: “The Chinese had as well knock under at once. The lazy louts will find Yankee enterprize [sic] more difficult to contend against than British oppression.”¹⁰³

Meanwhile, other farmers dreamed of the China market’s potential and therefore advocated the opening of the nation. A writer for the *American Farmer* gleefully considered the possibilities if the Chinese became “as fond of [tobacco] as they now are of the intoxicating, poisonous opium,”¹⁰⁴ and in April 1840 James H. Hammond—who two years later would be elected governor of South Carolina—asked Senator John C. Calhoun to “Suppose their Celestial ... policy were demolished & 800 millions of consumers of cotton goods were given to the world, what would it not be worth to us?”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Culture of Tea in America,” *West. Farm. and Gard.* (February 1845), 145.

¹⁰² “American Tea,” *South. Plant.* (June 1845), 126.

¹⁰³ “American Tea,” *South. Plant.* (October 1841), 188.

¹⁰⁴ “Substitute for Opium,” *Amer. Farmer* (May 20, 1840), 412.

¹⁰⁵ *Papers of John C. Calhoun*, v. 15, 193; *DAB*, v. 8, 207.

Many Yankee residents of Canton during the Opium War—who included Thomas Jefferson’s granddaughter and Franklin Roosevelt’s grandfather¹⁰⁶—regarded Britain’s campaign as excessive. Although by early 1841 Ellen Coolidge deemed the conduct of the Chinese government “atrocious,” “deceitful & treacherous,” she admitted to merchant Augustine Heard that “Hitherto I have had a good deal of sympathy for the Chinese, & have approved the mild treatment they have received.” She characterized the British, on the other hand, as “excessively bloody-minded.”¹⁰⁷ Heard admitted that, although the Chinese “are not faultless,” they were not guilty of “bad treatment of commercial foreigners.” “In their quarrel with the English,” he continued, “they appear to me to be entirely right.”¹⁰⁸

And while Britain’s victory benefited the United States, throughout the war Americans in China feared that the conflict would destroy their trade before it could expand it. Some were even uncertain that the British would win. “The result of Britain’s war with China will be *adverse* to the strangers,” Warren Delano informed Robert Bennet Forbes glumly in November 1841, and “if foreigners are not entirely excluded from China, they and their trade will be subjected to ... restrictions and exactions.” Delano dismissed as “ridiculous” the image of the Chinese surrendering at “the appearance of a few British men of war upon the coast of China.” The provinces had absorbed most of the Chinese costs of the war, he explained, and there

¹⁰⁶ Ellen Randolph Coolidge, wife of Russell & Co. employee Joseph Coolidge, was said to have been Jefferson’s favorite granddaughter; Warren Delano, Jr., who served as consul, was the father of Roosevelt’s mother, Sara Delano (Jacques M. Downs, *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784–1844* [Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1997], 192).

¹⁰⁷ Ellen Coolidge, Macao, to Augustine Heard, March 3, 1841, Heard Papers.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine Heard, Canton, to Dr. George Hayward, May 10, 1842. Heard Papers.

were no signs that they would concede anytime soon.¹⁰⁹ Augustine Heard shared his skepticism. In May 1842, Heard admitted that “nearly every one here seems confident that the Chinese will yield,” but “I am not so.” The Chinese had “learned a great deal since the war began,” he went on, “& every six months shows that they are harder to beat than they were before.”¹¹⁰ Some Americans back home were also unsettled. Of Great Britain, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* warned that “we have locked ourselves, ... so closely in her motion, that, if her course be impeded, we shall find ourselves to partake of the shock.” The journal later warned that war would increase Britain’s “already overgrown power ... in the East, to the injury of the other maritime powers of Europe and America.”¹¹¹

Americans in China were further distanced from the British because they were unwilling to risk an economic downturn by supporting them against the Chinese. When the British superintendent of trade asked the merchants of Russell & Co. to join the English in their boycott of Chinese commerce, for example, Forbes replied “that *I had not come to China for health or pleasure, and that I should remain at my port as long as I could sell a yard of goods or buy a pound of tea.*”¹¹² Other American merchants agreed with Forbes; and as historian Jacques Downs has noted, “Soon every American left in Canton ... was acting as agent for some British firm. The profits were huge and immediate.”¹¹³ In March 1841, Delano informed Forbes that the fact that American merchants were “extremely fortunate in our business” had made

¹⁰⁹ WD, Macao, to RBF, Nov. 20, 1841. WDP, FDR Library.

¹¹⁰ Augustine Heard, Canton, to Henry Stark, May 8, 1842. Heard Papers.

¹¹¹ “The Opium War, and its Justice,” 227; W. A., “Great Britain and China,” 281.

¹¹² Robert B. Forbes, *Personal Reminiscences* (Boston, 1882), 149.

¹¹³ Downs, *Golden Ghetto*, 181.

them “objects of the most unmitigated jealousy and enmity ... of our English friends.” But Delano enjoyed the Britons’ frustration. “If I can well annoy them,” he assured Forbes, “[I] am pretty sure to do so.”¹¹⁴

Americans in China and at home, however, shared a skepticism about Great Britain; what separated them were their opinions of the Chinese. Americans in Canton were far less sympathetic than were their stateside counterparts. They criticized the Chinese for confiscating more than twenty thousand chests of opium without reimbursing merchants, and they resented being confined to their warehouses and offices—known as “factories”—for several weeks while the confiscation took place. In his memoirs, Robert Bennet Forbes stressed to his audience the “great disadvantages” under which foreigners had had to trade at Canton and remained more focused on China’s “great opium seizure” than on Britain’s response to the confiscation. Westerners in Canton, he recalled, had been “prisoners in our own factories.”¹¹⁵ And Warren Delano, horrified at Chinese treatment of foreigners, rejoiced in October 1840 at news “that the Emperor had severely reprimanded *Linn*” for “maladministration.”¹¹⁶ The next month, Delano sent Forbes a “copy of the imperial order depriving Lin of office, and calling him to Peking to answer for his crimes.”¹¹⁷ Great Britain should “knock a little reason into this bigotted people,” Delano insisted, “and teach them to treat strangers with common decency.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ WD, Macao, to RBF, March 25, 1841, WDP, FDR Library.

¹¹⁵ Forbes, *Remarks*, 39; Forbes, *Personal Reminiscences*, 346, 148.

¹¹⁶ WD, Macao, to RBF, Oct. 11, 1840. WDP, FDR Library.

¹¹⁷ WD, Macao, to RBF, Nov. 22, 1840. WDP, FDR Library.

¹¹⁸ WD, Canton, to Frederic H. Delano, New York City, Sept. 21, 1839, WDP, FDR Library.

Because American residents in Canton were much more likely to criticize the Chinese than were Americans at home, it is perhaps unsurprising that there was friction when the two groups met. Robert Bennet Forbes addressed the opium issue in his memoirs, but one can glean from his writings that he was frequently criticized for his involvement in the trade. Forbes had grown up with the opium trade; when he was twelve years old, he was doing odd jobs at a Boston trading house. At thirteen he made his first trip to Canton, where relatives of his were involved in the trade.¹¹⁹ By thirty-six, he had become “head of the largest American house in China.”¹²⁰ When he retired, he devoted long passages in his *Personal Reminiscences* to his good deeds, which included bringing food to the Irish during the potato famine and saving lives in an 1849 shipwreck.¹²¹

In his introduction to 1844’s *Remarks on China and the China Trade*, Forbes noted that he was often asked about the opium trade and about what Great Britain gained ““by her cruel and oppressive war.””¹²² In his book, he defended Britain’s behavior. Although Forbes acknowledged the war’s “bloody scenes,” he asserted that only violence could open the country to foreign commerce. He presented the story of Captain Weddel—who centuries earlier had resorted to violence after failing to open China peaceably—as “valid evidence that the only proper negotiators for the Chinese were iron balls and fire and sword.”¹²³ Although Forbes’s response is legitimate—would Americans prefer trade achieved violently, or no trade at all?—his justification

¹¹⁹ Forbes, *Personal Reminiscences*, 27–28, 31, 41.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 168–69.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 188–96, 169–87.

¹²² Forbes, *Remarks*, 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 36.

is problematic. One failed attempt at peaceful negotiation does not doom future forays, and Forbes presented foreign trade as a right that may be asserted with “fire and sword,” rather than as a privilege that a nation may choose to withhold. He also ignored the fact that China was already allowing foreign trade. In a review of the book, a writer for the *North American Review* chided Forbes for dealing with the opium trade “only as a great commercial and political question; its moral aspect,” he continued, “in relation both to the consumers and the parties who bring it to China, being left entirely out of view.”¹²⁴

In Forbes’s *Personal Reminiscences*, the third edition of which appeared in 1882, the merchant’s agitation and frustration were palpable, as he provided a battery of excuses for the trade, before finally giving up. He noted that the opium trade could not have occurred without “the connivance of the Chinese local authorities.” He naturalized the trade, stating that there was a “regular understanding” between the merchants and Chinese officials, and that the trade went “harmoniously”—“like any honest traders”—unless someone tried to ship opium “without paying the mandarins.”¹²⁵ The opium trade was *technically* illegal, but “the officers of government encouraged its cultivation” for bribes and because many were addicts themselves. It was the unfavorable balance of trade, he continued, not the “moral effect on the people,” that caused the Chinese government to intervene. He then added that the trade imbalance was not so great as had been suggested, and that opium’s

¹²⁴ “Forbes on China and the China Trade,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (October 1844), 494. Forbes wanted “more able hands” to address the trade’s moral aspects, confined his memoir to “facts,” and allowed readers “to form their own conclusions” (Forbes, *Remarks*, 44).

¹²⁵ Forbes, *Personal Reminiscences*, 143.

“demoralizing” effects were “probably” no greater than those caused by “the use of ardent spirits.” None of the people involved regarded the trade as “smuggling,” he continued, explaining that “it was viewed as a legitimate business so long as the drug was sold on the coast,” and that it was “certainly legitimate in India, ... at Singapore, at Manila, [and] at Macao.” These are not the words of a man whose community has accepted his former line of work. At this point, one can almost hear his exhaustion. “I shall not go into any argument,” he concluded the section, “to prove that I considered it right to follow the example of England, the East India Company, ... and the merchants to whom I had always been accustomed to look up as exponents of all that was honorable in trade.”¹²⁶

Forbes came home to a country that was experiencing an era of reform. Between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, progressive Americans invaded their nation’s almshouses, prisons, mental hospitals, and the poorer parts of cities and catalogued the forlorn inhabitants, inhumane treatment, and filthy conditions, to lobby for better conditions and services for these members of society. And they alluded to empire as they described America’s dark places.¹²⁷ When New York writer Cornelius Mathews reached his city’s Bowery in the early 1850s, he wrote that he felt like

¹²⁶ Ibid., 143–45.

¹²⁷ Nineteenth-century middle-class Britons regarded poor and working-class Britons in much the same way that they regarded nonwhite subjects of the British empire. (Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* [New York and London: Routledge, 1995]; Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], especially chapter 4, in which Herbert describes the similarities between Thomas Mayhew’s description of Polynesian tribes and his description of London’s poor.)

Captain John Smith “sail[ing] up James’s River in the early day of Virginia.”¹²⁸ Also in New York, Solon Robinson—who was publishing an agricultural journal in Gotham—told of men and boys having “a little fun” with a drunken woman by hunting her “through the streets of a Christian city, as savages hunt tigers through the jungles of Africa—for fun.”¹²⁹ When reformer Dorothea Dix appealed for an asylum for the poor and mentally ill in Nashville in 1847, she described them as “pinning in cells and dungeons ... cast out, cast off, like the Pariah of the Hindoos.”¹³⁰

Domestic reforms that responded to these conditions were largely funded by American opium merchants, who became philanthropists upon their return home. Americans tended not to connect the philanthropy with its illicit source, perhaps because they did not even know that Americans were involved in the opium trade. Their ignorance made the opium issue appear simpler than it actually was, because they did not have to weigh opium’s negative effects in China with the benefits of opium fortunes in America. Some observers even condemned the opium trade while praising the institutions that the trade helped to sustain. In the spring of 1841, for example, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* lambasted the British for introducing opium into the “great nation” of China. Opium’s progress, he wrote, was “more desolating than that of the sword, for it spares no condition, and more fatal than the

¹²⁸ Cornelius Mathews, *Pen-and-Ink Panorama of New York City* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1853), 124.

¹²⁹ Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* (New York: DeWitt and Davenport Publishers, 1854), 328; *DAB*, v. 16, 51.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Thomas J. Brown, *Dorothea Dix: New England Reformer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 145–46.

plague, for it destroys the soul.”¹³¹ The year before, “L. M.,” in writing for the Unitarian publication, had praised the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, where, he wrote, one could see “benevolence working in its highest and surest paths.”¹³² The namesake of the institution was Thomas Handasyd Perkins, a Boston philanthropist who had shored up the institution with money he had made in the Chinese opium trade.

Trade was “the road to fortune” before the Industrial Revolution,¹³³ and many of America’s wealthiest men worked for the British East India Company. America’s first millionaire was Elias Hasket Derby, an East India merchant who left \$1.5 million at the time of his death, in 1799.¹³⁴ Thomas Perkins’s nephew John Perkins Cushing became the wealthiest man of his generation. After working for his uncle’s company in China for almost thirty years, he returned to Boston in 1831 with seven million dollars.¹³⁵

By Perkins’s time, some of New England’s most prized institutions owed their prosperity—if not their very existence—to East India Company fortunes. When Connecticut College was in financial straits in the early eighteenth century, clergyman Cotton Mather asked Elihu Yale for assistance. Yale, who had made his fortune in India with the East India Company, gave a generous donation to the school, in return

¹³¹ “The Opium War, and its Justice,” 224, 227.

¹³² L. M., “The Perkins Institution,” *Chr. Exam.* (July 1840), article 359–78. quote 378.

¹³³ Downs, *Golden Ghetto*, 143.

¹³⁴ E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 219.

¹³⁵ Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 151.

for which the grateful trustees renamed it in his honor.¹³⁶ Rhode Island College became Brown University in 1804, to recognize Nicholas Brown's generous donation. Brown also provided the school with a law library, funds for the construction of Manning Hall, which included a library and a chapel, and land for the president's house.¹³⁷ The China trade had pulled Brown out of debt¹³⁸ and made him one of America's first East India millionaires; in his company was George Peabody, who built buildings and museums in Salem, Baltimore, and Nashville and at Harvard and Yale universities.¹³⁹ In addition to his contributions to what became Brown University, Nicholas Brown gave money to establish a hospital for the mentally ill in Providence.¹⁴⁰

Such philanthropy became common among those who made their fortunes in trade. "The munificence of Christian merchants," writer and Methodist Episcopal clergyman Daniel Wise would observe later in the century, had been responsible for the "existence or prosperity" of "The Boston Athenaeum, Cambridge [Harvard] University, the Perkins institution for the blind, the insane asylum at Providence, R. I., most of our colleges, many infirmaries and hospitals, and countless churches."¹⁴¹ The

¹³⁶ R. K. Gupta, *The Great Encounter: A Study of Indo-American Literary and Cultural Relations* (Riverdale, Md.: The Riverdale Company, Inc., 1987), 3. Mather told Yale that the college would give him "a fame more enduring than the pyramids" (*DAB*, v. 20, 591).

¹³⁷ Edward Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History* (Boston and Syracuse: The Mason Publishing Company, 1902), v.2, 348, 623; [Untitled], *Christian Secretary* (April 5, 1839).

¹³⁸ Edward Sanderson, "Rhode Island Merchants in the China Trade," in Linda Lotridge Levin, ed., *Federal Rhode Island: The Age of the China Trade, 1790-1820* (Providence, R. I.: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1978), 42, 44-48.

¹³⁹ G. Bhagat, *Americans in India, 1784-1860* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 72.

¹⁴⁰ Field, ed., v. 2, 57-58.

¹⁴¹ Rev. Daniel Wise, "Hearthside Ideals of Mercantile Men," *Ladies' Repos.* (September 1876), 264 (*MOA*); *DAB*, v. 20, 422.

fact that opium wealth made much of this munificence possible went largely unmentioned.¹⁴² Like the staff of the *Christian Examiner*, many Americans excoriated the opium trade, then praised the institutions that the opium trade sustained.

The Perkins Institution is a prime example. Dr. Samuel G. Howe tutored six blind students at the New England Institute for the Blind in the early 1830s, then demonstrated "their capacity for improvement" to the public. At this time, according to Howe, the school's "Treasury was empty, and the Institution in debt," by hundreds of dollars.¹⁴³ Perkins, "deeply interested" by the display, donated his Pearl Street mansion to the institute and spurred a community drive to raise \$50,000 for the school. Perkins had already helped raise \$100,000 as a trustee of the Massachusetts General Hospital with an Asylum for the Insane,¹⁴⁴ which became in 1846 the site of the first painless operation. The successful use of ether was a medical milestone and perhaps "the first important, entirely American contribution to medical science."¹⁴⁵ Perkins also supported the Boston Female Asylum, an organization that cared for orphaned girls and in which his wife was active, and he was a major donor to the Boston Athenaeum, which he served for several years as president. He also sponsored construction of what was arguably the first railroad in America.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Jacques Downs notes the philanthropy of opium merchants in "Fair Game," 146–48.

¹⁴³ [Samuel G. Howe], "Education of the Blind," *N. Amer. Rev.* (July 1833), 57; Maud Howe and Florence Howe Hall, *Laura Bridgman: Dr. Howe's Famous Pupil and What He Taught Her* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1903), 10.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas G. Cary, *The Memoir of Thomas Handasyd Perkins ...* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1856), 220.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph E. Garland, *Every Man Our Neighbor: A Brief History of the Massachusetts General Hospital, 1811–1961* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), 13; Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy: Harvard & the Boston Upper Class, 1800–1870* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 10.

¹⁴⁶ Debra Gold Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery*

The re-christened Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind was the only school for the blind at that time in New England and became one of the best known charitable institutions in the state.¹⁴⁷ Its most celebrated student was the deaf, blind, and mute Laura Bridgman, whose accomplishments disproved the conventional wisdom of the time, that such a person could not receive “effectual instruction in reading and writing.”¹⁴⁸ Howe communicated with Bridgman by teaching her a finger alphabet. Charles Darwin wrote about her, and Charles Dickens devoted a long section of his *American Notes* to Bridgman’s case.¹⁴⁹ When Helen Keller’s mother read the Bridgman chapter in *American Notes*, she contacted the Perkins school to get a teacher for her daughter. Bridgman had taught the finger alphabet to Annie Sullivan, a student at the school who became Keller’s miracle worker.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps most important, the Perkins Institution’s renown encouraged more widespread education of blind children from non-elite families.¹⁵¹

People who wrote about the Perkins Institution did not connect Perkins with the opium trade that made him wealthy. Perhaps this was because Perkins retired long before the Opium War, or because, unlike Forbes, he never published candid memoirs

Society (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 60, 58; Cary, 222.

¹⁴⁷ Cary, 223; *The National Almanac and Annual Record for the Year 1863* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1863), 374 (MOA); L. Colange, Zell’s *Popular Encyclopedia, A Universal Dictionary of English Language, Science, Literature, and Art* (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Zell, 1871), v. 2, 312 (MOA).

¹⁴⁸ Cary, 224.

¹⁴⁹ Darwin wrote about her in *The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Elisabeth Gitter, *The Imprisoned Guest: Samuel Howe and Laura Bridgman, the Original Deaf-Blind Girl* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001], 5). Dickens describes the Perkins Institution, Laura Bridgman, and her fellow student Oliver Caswell in *American Notes* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 44–61.

¹⁵⁰ Gitter, 8, 6.

¹⁵¹ Ira Mayhew, *Popular Education: For the Use of Parents and Teachers, and for Young Persons of Both Sexes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), 124 (MOA).

of his career. The only contemporary biography of Perkins—a lengthy article in *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* that was published in an expanded form as the *Memoir of Thomas Handasyd Perkins* in 1856—was written by his son-in-law, Thomas G. Cary, and never mentioned opium.¹⁵²

But the source of Perkins's fortune was illicit. "It is our intention," Perkins wrote to a colleague of the contraband trade in 1818, "to push it as far as we can."¹⁵³ A Perkins & Co. letter from August 7, 1819, acknowledged "the stigma that attaches to those who deal" in the drug. "It is considered a very *disreputable* business," the author explained, "& view'd by the Chinese" as akin to "smuggling."¹⁵⁴ An 1824 letter acknowledged difficulties with the "illicit trade" due to "existing prohibitions in China" and advised the crew of a company vessel "to judge how far this trade can be prosecuted with safety."¹⁵⁵ By 1830, Perkins had personal wealth valued at more than \$700,000, acquired, as recent biographers put it, because "China, and opium, had been good to him."¹⁵⁶ Perhaps Perkins himself best expressed the drug's importance in an 1827 letter: "I have written and thought so much of Opium," he wrote, "that it

¹⁵² Seaburg and Paterson, 420. References to Perkins in secondary literature rarely mention opium, partially because sources tend to use the Cary *Memoir*. In its entry for Perkins, the 1946 *Dictionary of American Biography* mentioned the China trade but described Perkins only as a "merchant, philanthropist" and as someone who was "best known for his philanthropies" (*DAB*, v. 14, 477). The *Memorial History of Boston* referred to Perkins as "an eminent merchant and a distinguished citizen" (Hamilton Andrews Hall, "The Trade, Commerce, and Navigation of Boston, 1780–1880," v. 4, 207). Recent biographies of Laura Bridgman refer to Perkins only as "a shipping tycoon" and "a wealthy merchant" (Gitter, 43; Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001], 17).

¹⁵³ "Extracts," March 24, 1818, quoted in Seaburg and Paterson, 285.

¹⁵⁴ Perkins & Co. letter, Canton, Aug. 7, 1819, Perkins Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS).

¹⁵⁵ J. L. Perkins, J and T. H. Perkins, Boston, to Perkins & Co., Duxbury, April 28, 1824, Perkins Letters, MHS.

¹⁵⁶ Seaburg and Paterson, 372.

gives me an opiate to enter upon the subject.”¹⁵⁷

Given the shady nature of his fortune, there are several ways in which one could interpret Perkins's later beneficence. Were his efforts to promote education for the blind a way to atone for ill-gotten wealth? The shadowiness of the opium trade is suggested not only by Americans' overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward the Opium War but also by Cary's avoidance of the word “opium” in his father-in-law's memoirs, despite its prominent role in his business dealings. For Perkins, there was a stigma even *without* opium; Boston's elite perceived merchants as having “closed hearts, and tight fists,” and as the elite began opting for professions that were “untainted with any suggestion of money-making,” Perkins's “compulsive, entrepreneurial spirit” became precisely the quality that those who did pursue business hoped to avoid.¹⁵⁸ This antagonism is shown in the stories of T. S. Arthur, who wrote for *Godey's Lady's Book*, the most popular women's magazine of the day. In “Marrying a Merchant,” Josephine plans to marry a merchant because she wants “to be well taken care of, and to be sustained in good society.” She recommends that Mary do the same—and specifically suggests a merchant named Perkins—but Mary instead marries a clerk whom she loves. Josephine laughs at her friend's choice, but Mary ends up happily married and sufficiently well off, while Josephine's husband only married her to have a “showy” wife, and the couple lives beyond their means.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ THP, Boston, to John P. Cushing, Jan. 11, 1827, Perkins Papers, MHS. Also quoted in Seaburg and Paterson, 340–41.

¹⁵⁸ Thornton, 142, 205.

¹⁵⁹ T. S. Arthur, “Marrying a Merchant,” *Godey's Lady's Book* (October 1842), 160, 161, 164. In “Retiring from Business,” Arthur emphasizes the importance of businessmen working “to correct evils in society” (*Godey's* [June 1843], 288).

To distance themselves from this greedy image, many merchants—including, most prominently, Thomas H. Perkins—developed strong amateur interests in horticulture, to demonstrate their ability “to appreciate what had no market value and no apparent uses.”¹⁶⁰ There is yet another way to question the motives behind his philanthropy: by criticizing philanthropy as a way for elites to maintain power. By privately funding good works, philanthropists such as Perkins preserved their powerful position atop the social hierarchy—a position that they might lose if such services were publicly funded. As such, philanthropy loses the primarily generous nature of charity.¹⁶¹

Any of these critiques can be launched against Perkins when we look at his contributions to society, but ultimately they are beside the point. No matter what induced Perkins to donate, the point is that his wealth—opium wealth—enriched and advanced many New England institutions, including the school for the blind. “Something important would have eventually been done in Massachusetts for the education of the blind,” conceded Thomas G. Cary, had Perkins not stepped forward. But the merchant’s participation “suddenly roused the community to aid in the project, ... which otherwise it probably would have required the lapse of many years, with arduous exertions, to attain.”¹⁶² However biased Cary was, on this point he is convincing. Arriving at the school as a seven-year-old, Laura Bridgman was a quick study; her progress may have been far slower, if not impossible, had she had to wait

¹⁶⁰ Thornton, 162.

¹⁶¹ Baltzell, 77–78; Story, 6–12. Edward Sanderson has noted that merchants in Providence, R. I., built large homes and compared such construction with the “role of the house in England,” part of which was to “buttress the social order” (Sanderson, 54).

¹⁶² Cary, 225.

for another patron to step forward.¹⁶³

Attention to Perkins's philanthropy is not intended to suggest that Boston's merchant prince was a nineteenth-century Robin Hood. He was not. He was in business to make money, and he kept most of what he made. But such attention reveals an important aspect of the opium trade on which contemporary sources were largely silent: the fact that huge wealth, however accumulated, may have a significant positive impact on American communities. Would Americans have been less critical of the opium trade if they had balanced the trade's exploitation with its benefits for the mentally ill, or its help to the blind in "offer[ing] intelligence, enjoyment, and usefulness, in place of ignorance, sorrow, and idleness"?¹⁶⁴ Would they have been willing to sacrifice their own institutions—or at least to have their greatness delayed—to spare millions of Chinese from stupefaction?

The question is a fair one. As mentioned earlier, trade was the way to wealth in antebellum America. And many antebellum American millionaires derived their fortunes from the British East India Company, either as employees or—in 1830s China—as traders in a market that the British established. To look at the contributions of merchants who avoided the opium trade could be misleading. Without opium merchants, the abstainers may never have gotten to China in the first place. Jacques Downs, the leading authority on the American community in China, insists that

¹⁶³ "Laura Bridgman," *Friend* (Dec. 8, 1838); Howe and Hall, 43. Julia Brace, for example, was a deaf, blind, and mute woman who had difficulty communicating. Howe attributed her difficulty to the fact that she did not arrive at the American Asylum at Hartford, Conn., until she was "past the age which nature destines for acquiring and storing up knowledge" (Howe and Hall, 58; Howe quoted on *ibid.*, 109).

¹⁶⁴ Cary, 223.

without opium, it is doubtful that “the legitimate China trade could have developed much beyond” what it had attained by the late eighteenth century.¹⁶⁵ And in his global history of the drug, Carl Trocki concurred. “Opium was crucial to the expansion of the British Empire during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century,” he explained. Without it, “there may have been no empire at all.” Capitalism sought new markets which “were not built on wheat, nor wool nor widgets, not even cotton comes close.” Drugs, because they were addictive, provided large amounts of revenue like nothing else could.¹⁶⁶ Opium then emerges as a way to the fortunes that sustained many of New England’s finest institutions.

Americans may have seen the Perkins Institution as untainted, much as Chinese patients may have regarded Dr. Peter Parker’s popular Ophthalmic Hospital as untainted. But as shown earlier, much of the support behind Parker’s hospital was not simply benevolent; a quid pro quo was involved. And just as Chinese patients’ willingness to be treated at Parker’s hospital could be interpreted as tacit support for the foreign presence, American support for merchants’ largesse in their communities, even if unwitting, was tacit support for the opium trade.

American money gained in the commercial empire abroad financed the conquering of a metaphorical empire at home. Dr. Samuel Howe invoked the language of empire in his reports, and rightly so; in the 1830s, the mind of a blind, deaf, and mute girl truly was uncharted territory. In his *Commentaries*, influential

¹⁶⁵ Downs, *Golden Ghetto*, 112.

¹⁶⁶ Trocki, 10, 28, 10. Sanderson has noted that ships sailing to China from Providence, R. I., gave trade duties ten times higher than those that sailed to Europe (Sanderson, 51–52).

British jurist William Blackstone had noted that “a man who is born deaf, dumb, and blind is looked upon by the law as in the same state with an idiot; he being supposed incapable of any understanding.”¹⁶⁷ Howe quoted Blackstone in his ninth annual report on the school, as he went about invading terrain that the British had deemed unconquerable. This sense of competition with Europe remained, as Howe used “native ingenuity” to improve on European methods of teaching the blind, and he believed that America could succeed where Europe had failed. “Many attempts have been made in France and England to get the means for printing the whole New Testament,” he observed in 1833. “Let it be then for America to effect this.”¹⁶⁸ And educator Horace Mann insisted that “I should rather have built up the Blind Asylum than have written Hamlet.”¹⁶⁹

Allusions to imperial encounters pervade the literature on Howe and Bridgman. Early on, Howe wanted to teach blind students to read and have them read the New Testament. In his first annual report, he considered this to be, in the words of Harold Schwartz, “as desirable as sending Bibles to savages.” And Elisabeth Gitter has observed that Howe’s reports of Bridgman “read like anthropological reports of encounters with ‘savages,’” as he “invited readers to marvel at a primitive but extraordinary creature.”¹⁷⁰ As Howe communicated with “those who are sitting in

¹⁶⁷ Howe’s *Annual Report IX*, 34, 35, quoted in Mary Swift Lamson, *Life and Education of Laura Dewey Bridgman, The Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Girl* (Boston: New England Publishing Company, 1879), x.

¹⁶⁸ [Samuel G. Howe], “Education of the Blind,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (July 1833), 58, 43; Freeberg, 11.

¹⁶⁹ Laura E. Richards, ed., *The Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe* (Boston: Dana Estes, 1909) vol. 2, 107, quoted in Gitter, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Harold Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe: Social Reformer, 1801–1876* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 51; Gitter, 106.

physical and intellectual darkness”—including Bridgman, who had arrived at the school as an “unsophisticated child of nature”¹⁷¹—the doctor’s contemporaries compared him with Christopher Columbus.¹⁷² Because of his success in educating Bridgman—and because of the frequent use of imperial language in describing his work—it is fitting that, in 1851, a writer for the *Boston Evening Transcript* suggested that Bridgman and Queen Victoria were the two most famous women in the world.¹⁷³

Other reforms that came partially from opium money also invoked the language of empire. Dr. Isaac Ray, superintendent of Providence, Rhode Island’s Butler Hospital for the Insane, compared helping the mentally ill with the imperial elevation of native peoples. Nicholas Brown gave money to establish the hospital, and Dorothea Dix garnered additional support for Butler Hospital from Cyrus Butler, a Providence merchant who helped arrange for Samuel Russell to go to Canton. In Canton, Russell founded Russell & Co., the most successful American merchant house in China and one that was heavily involved in the opium trade.¹⁷⁴ Dr. Ray oversaw the hospital from 1846 to 1867 and was a founding member of the American Psychiatric Association.¹⁷⁵ At the laying of the cornerstone at the State Hospital for the Insane in Danville, Pennsylvania, in 1869, Ray characterized the impetus to help

¹⁷¹ [Howe], “Education of the Blind,” 56; Howe, *Ninth Annual Report*, 38, quoted in Freeberg, 103.

¹⁷² Howe and Hall, 157. In 1846, Massachusetts General Hospital—another of Perkins’s pet projects—was the site of the first operation in which ether was used. Joseph E. Garland prefaced his description of this accomplishment by stating that “If the year 1846 was decisive in the expansion of the American republic, it was nearly as climactic for the newly awakened interest in science out of which an original and independent tradition of achievement was being created in the United States” (Garland, 13).

¹⁷³ *Boston Evening Transcript* (June 14, 1851), referred to in Gitter, 4, 104.

¹⁷⁴ Brown, 102; Downs, *Golden Ghetto*, 162; Jacques M. Downs, “American Merchants and the Chinese Opium Trade, 1800–1840,” *Business History Review* 42 (1968), 435.

¹⁷⁵ Field, v. 3, 420; Frank J. Curran in I. Ray, M.D., *Mental Hygiene* (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1968; orig. pub. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863), introduction.

the mentally ill as resulting from “civilizing and christianizing influences ... to lead back the wandering mind out of the darkness and mazes of disease into the unclouded light of reason.”¹⁷⁶ In his 1863 book *Mental Hygiene*, Ray compared the difference between those who were mentally ill and healthy to “the difference between a native Australian and a cultivated European.” Although “Individuals of the former classes may be improved,” he explained, “no ingenuity of discipline could possibly raise them to the level of the latter.”¹⁷⁷

Yet still, there were Americans who dwelled on the United States’ other empire, its growing commercial presence abroad. Lacking government representation of any consequence, Americans in Canton had traded freely but felt vulnerable during the Opium War. The absence of government involvement could not persist; substantial overseas trade required treaties and protection. But Americans did not want an empire akin to Great Britain’s; although they were in awe of Britain’s accomplishments, the war made them acutely aware of their costs. With government protection—but without regulation—Americans believed that they could challenge British supremacy in trade.

The British empire was impressive. It was large and wealthy, and it held “kings as vassals.” But its flaws were apparent. During the war, the *Catholic Telegraph*—as well as the *Friend*, like the *Telegraph* a journal inclined to oppose the

¹⁷⁶ Isaac Ray, *Contributions to Mental Pathology* (1873) (Delmar, N. Y.: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1973), 2.

¹⁷⁷ Ray, *Mental Hygiene*, 11–12.

British—noted that within a century the empire had gone from “the humble rank of a trading factory to an *imperium* of more than 100,000,000 of inhabitants, with an equal number ... who, though under their own princes, still obey the British power.” The island nation ruled over more than a million square miles of “the most fertile part of the surface of the earth.”¹⁷⁸ But there was much not to praise. The *Catholic Telegraph* complimented the United States as “the only country in christendom which has set the precious, wise and noble example of non-interference with the affairs of other nations.”¹⁷⁹ And although a writer for the Presbyterian *Princeton Review* noted in 1841 that the empire “has long been in many respects the admiration of mankind,” he juxtaposed “Its power, ... its unwonted accumulation of capital, the incalculable resources of its industry” with Britain’s national debt and the “starving condition of two-thirds of the population.”¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* condemned the East India Company as “deformed in every feature, ill-contrived and ill-executed, as an instrument of government, corrupt, corrupting, and vile in all its uses.”¹⁸¹

Of the period from 1821 through the Opium War, Jacques Downs has observed that “in almost all innovations which risked confrontation with the Chinese, British private merchants led and the Americans followed—cautiously.”¹⁸² Staying in the shadows had its benefits; although the absence of government involvement left

¹⁷⁸ “The British Empire in the East Indies,” *Cath. Tel.* (Nov. 28, 1839), 403; and “Boundaries of the British Empire in the East,” *Friend* (Jan. 4, 1840).

¹⁷⁹ [Untitled], *Cath. Tel.* (Nov. 27, 1841), 383.

¹⁸⁰ “M’Culloch’s British Empire,” *Prin. Rev.* (July 1841), 432.

¹⁸¹ “Great Britain and China,” 312.

¹⁸² Downs, “American Merchants,” 429.

residents at Canton unprotected, America's informal commercial presence provided its participants with the best of both worlds. Great Britain fought the war and sustained domestic and international criticism for it, while Americans could criticize both parties in the conflict and profit from the situation.¹⁸³ Illicit American trade thrived with limited criticism, and because the British won the war, Americans never had to decide how far they would go to protect such a lucrative trade.

During the war, the pressures of British bureaucracy inclined Americans to believe that they could defeat the British for "supremacy of the world," were a showdown to occur.¹⁸⁴ As mentioned earlier, a writer for the *Southern Planter* believed that the Chinese would "find Yankee enterprize more difficult to contend against than British oppression."¹⁸⁵ A *Christian Examiner* writer thought of the "large proportion of its internal resources" that Great Britain would require to defend its expansive empire, while American strength was "collected at one point."¹⁸⁶ And before the conflict, a writer for the *North American Review* looked at failed British attempts to pry open China and observed that "our Yankee astuteness and sagacity has in general managed to gain more for our interest in China, than the more imposing, but ... most ill-judged policy of the English."¹⁸⁷

But government had to play a role. In 1844, James H. Lanman—a frequent

¹⁸³ Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, many Britons criticized their government's prosecution of the Opium War. For Forbes, America's best-of-both-worlds situation was not enough; he was piqued that the United States was excluded from discussions regarding which ports to open to foreign commerce (Forbes, *Personal Reminiscences*, 364).

¹⁸⁴ "The Opium War, and its Justice," 234.

¹⁸⁵ "American Tea," *South. Plant.* (October 1841), 188.

¹⁸⁶ "The Opium War, and its Justice," 234.

¹⁸⁷ "Embassies to Eastern Asia," *N. Amer. Rev.* (October 1838), 402.

contributor to *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* and author of a *History of Michigan*¹⁸⁸—stated that the “enormous magnitude” of American commerce made new laws necessary, both to provide government revenue and “to ensure the safety of the persons and property ever afloat upon the sea.”¹⁸⁹ The unpaid post of consul—which was held by a resident merchant—had constituted the only official United States representation in Canton. This had given Americans little leverage in times of crisis. When the Chinese took several Americans into custody during the conflict, consul Warren Delano could “do nothing more than *petition*,” or ask for help from the chief superintendent of British trade. “Had we a squadron now here,” Delano wrote to Robert Bennet Forbes in May 1841, “something might be done.”¹⁹⁰ The ideal lay with a situation in which Americans would maintain commercial freedom within a framework in which rules had been established, rules provided in the 1844 Treaty of Wanghia. American merchants could enjoy opium’s effects without the expense and pains of hopeless addiction—or the potential agony of withdrawal—with which the British had to contend. But while most Americans back home remained ignorant of their connection to the trade, they celebrated the improvements in their domestic institutions. As the empire of reform at home developed, more were becoming addicted to empire abroad than they could have imagined.

¹⁸⁸ James Henry Lanman, *History of Michigan, from its Earliest Colonization to the Present Time* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841).

¹⁸⁹ James H. Lanman, “The Commercial System of the United States,” *Hunt's Merch. Mag.* (July 1844), 47.

¹⁹⁰ WD, Whampoa, to RBF, May 23, 1841, and WD, Macao, to RBF, Aug. 4, 1841. WDP, FDR Library.

CHAPTER IV THE CAPE COLONY, 1834–1847

American merchant navigator Richard Cleveland was impressed with the orderliness of Cape Town, South Africa, when he visited the colonial city in the spring of 1798. “The streets are parallel to each other, and are kept very clean,” he recalled in his *Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises*, which was published in 1842. He credited the town’s “fine appearance” partly to the Dutch emigrants who had founded the colony and long governed it. In 1798 it was under British control—Sir George Macartney served as governor—and British rule would be secured with the peace settlement that concluded the Napoleonic Wars in 1814. Cleveland noted that the East India Company’s twenty-acre garden was “laid out in handsome walks, and forms one of the most delightful lounges in the world.” But other aspects of the town revealed the tensions that underlay the scene. The garden was “enclosed by a wall,” which suggests the Europeans’ exclusive status. The town also featured “a large square for a parade ground,” where Great Britain’s military forces could demonstrate their might to the colonized. And Cleveland frankly acknowledged that the Western presence in South Africa was, at best, a mixed blessing to the Africans. “Notwithstanding the increase of buildings, and the rise in value of real estate, as well as various other advantages, felt by the inhabitants since they submitted to the English government,” he observed, “there was, nevertheless, observable in many an impatience of a foreign yoke, a feeling of being a conquered

people, and a sense of degradation, which was very natural, and which would not be easily effaced even under the mild and equitable government of the English.”¹

This tension—between the apparent benefits of Western innovations and the pressures of foreign rule—is a theme to which Americans repeatedly referred as they commented on the British presence in South Africa. This chapter will follow Great Britain’s governance of the colony from 1834, when the British began emancipating Cape Colony slaves, to the British defeat of the Xhosa in 1847. During this period, South Africa was not a profitable colony—it served primarily as a stopping place for ships traveling between Europe and the East Indies. But soon after the Boers—farmers of Dutch descent—moved north in the 1830s to escape British control, British hold of the colony grew more extensive. It was this expansion that led to the clash with the Xhosa. As with British expansion elsewhere, many white Americans praised the invasion as benefiting the natives. But others shook their heads as they followed the events, feeling certain that the Africans’ fate would be as grim as that of the American Indians.

Many Americans supported British rule in South Africa. They suggested that British governance brought safety, Christianity, and the benefits of Western innovation to benighted heathen, and they portrayed Africans as the aggressors in colonial-native conflicts. Several sources characterized British imperialism in South

¹ Richard J. Cleveland, *A Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises* (Cambridge: John Owen, 1842), vol. 1, 33–35; Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1939), vol. 4, 204, hereafter referred to as *DAB*; Alan R. Booth, *The United States Experience in South Africa, 1784–1870* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1976), 19; Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 52.

Africa as “liberal,” by which they meant that the British took pains to protect the subjects they governed. More heartening still to American abolitionists was the British government’s emancipation of slaves in its empire in 1833, which suggested that a non-racist, non-exploitative form of foreign control was in the offing.

This optimism was bolstered by favorable comparisons of British imperialists with their Dutch predecessors. Americans noted that Great Britain populated and Christianized the colony at a much brisker pace than had the Netherlands. And American regard for Dutch descendants dipped further when proslavery Boers migrated to the Natal province—on Zulu land—to preserve their unfree labor force. Skirmishes between Boers and Zulus delayed mission efforts in the region, and many Americans celebrated the British decision to take control of Natal in 1843.² American missionaries were among the strongest supporters of the British in Natal, as they came to see only the British as having the wherewithal to stabilize South Africa sufficiently for missionary work to occur there.

American Catholics and abolitionists, however, tended to perceive British rule, even with slavery abolished, as corrupting and oppressing South Africans, rather than uplifting them. Some, addressing the notion that race correlated with intelligence, assured their readers that certain African races were quite light-skinned, to weaken the case for foreign rule. Many expressed their fear that South Africans would meet the same fate as American Indians. And while some suggested that the British had overstated their accomplishments in the colony, others asked their readers

² Thompson, 93.

to consider that Western incursions, not African violence, sparked conflicts between the peoples.

On the eve of contact with Europe, South Africans included herders, farmers, and many hunter-gatherers who lived in semipermanent villages. Upon reaching South Africa, Europeans would refer to the hunter-gatherers as Bushmen, the herders as Hottentots, and the farmers as Kaffirs, although period accounts—presented below—will demonstrate that Europeans also perceived racial differences among the groups. Recent historians refer to the Bushmen as San, Hottentots as Khoikhoi, southern Kaffirs as Xhosa, and northern Kaffirs as Zulus.³

In 1487, Portuguese explorer Bartholemeu Dias became the first European to round South Africa's Cape peninsula. Over the next century, the Portuguese popularized the route for European trade.⁴ According to Captain Benjamin Morrell in 1832's *Narrative of Four Voyages*, Portugal's monarch named it the Cape of Good Hope "as he had now *good* reason to *hope* that around this newly-discovered point of Africa lay the long-wished-for passage to India."⁵ It would indeed become heavily traveled.

In 1652, during the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic, the Netherlands took the Cape of Good Hope as a colony, to serve as a stopping place for ships traveling between the Netherlands and Java. Dutch settlers in the colony oversaw slaves who

³ Thompson, 10, 16.

⁴ Ibid., 31, 32.

⁵ Capt. Benjamin Morrell, Jun., *A Narrative of Four Voyages ...* (New-York: J. & J. Harper, 1832), 279; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, eds., *A History of South Africa to 1870* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983), 187.

built the Cape's infrastructure, and Dutch settlement imposed on the lands of African farmers. Although Africans resisted the encroachment, the superior weaponry of the Dutch enabled them to establish control.⁶

Turmoil caused by the Napoleonic Wars gave Great Britain the opportunity to capture the Cape Colony in 1795, and an 1814 treaty secured the colony for Great Britain. Throughout the period under review, the British government only provided minimal investment in the colony.⁷ The British abolished slavery throughout their empire in 1833, and in the 1840s incorporated the inland Natal province into the colony. In 1847, the British secured control over Natal's native population, with their victory over the Xhosa.

"Cape Town is important to England principally as her stopping place for her East India trade," explained American missionary A. E. Wilson in 1835 in the *African Repository* (1826–1892).⁸ Although the spot facilitated British trade elsewhere, the Cape Colony was not a financial windfall. It "might seem, at first sight, a more valuable domain, for the purposes of colonization or commerce, than it has proved, or is likely to prove itself for some time to come," admitted a writer for the Unitarian *Christian Examiner*, also in 1835. The British had settled the colony more rapidly than the "snail's-pace" of their Dutch predecessors, but South Africa was, "as a territorial acquisition ... among the most insignificant possessions of the British

⁶ Ibid., 33, 38.

⁷ Ibid., 51, 52–53.

⁸ Quoted in "Letter from South Africa," *Af. Repos.* [Washington, D. C.] (August 1835), 238.

Government.”⁹ Still, the potential for uplifting the native peoples—or of harming them—would attract American attention to the colony.

Many white Americans had low regard for pre-contact Africans, and consequently they saw the Europeans’ introduction of Protestant Christianity and Western innovations as a great benefit to them. To a writer for the Presbyterian *Princeton Review*, Africans had “sunk to the lowest depths of brutality” before the Westerners arrived.¹⁰ *The African Repository*, a journal devoted to repatriating freed slaves in Africa, characterized natives who were unfamiliar with Christianity as being in a “truly appalling” condition. “Here is wrath unmingled with mercy,” the writer insisted in 1835. “One tribe seeks to annihilate another. ... No cries, no tears, move the heart of a savage, hardened with reiterated crimes.”¹¹ “Heathen hamlets, which never before heard anything but the sounds of war and obscene mirth,” was the description of the Reverend Robert Moffat, a longtime missionary in the colony whose speech appeared in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*. But in 1840, he could happily report that “you may now hear the songs of Zion sung in a strange land.”¹²

British and American missionaries proselytized among South Africans while other Westerners brought secular innovations to the colony. The first members of the London Missionary Society arrived in 1819, and their work was well under way by the time the first American missionaries set off for South Africa, on December 3,

⁹ “The Cape of Good Hope,” *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 391.

¹⁰ “Missionary Labours in Southern Africa,” *Prin. Rev.* (April 1843), 313.

¹¹ “Mission to the Mantatees in South Africa,” *Af. Repos.* (August 1837), 251.

¹² “Other Societies:—London Missionary Society,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (December 1840), 297.

1834.¹³ In a letter the next year, American missionary George Champion recalled “the kindness of our British friends” upon their arrival in South Africa, where John Philip, who led London Missionary Society efforts in the colony, received him and his colleagues “with open arms.”¹⁴ Many Americans praised the missionaries for their efforts. In 1834, the *Missionary Herald* reported that “congregations are crowded.”¹⁵ The *African Repository* informed its readers that a “Chapel, which will contain one thousand persons, has been built at one station, together with two small chapels,” and that “Many of the young are anxiously inquiring what they must do to be saved.”¹⁶ Secular changes to the country were both practical and aesthetic. “Cape Town is shortly to be lighted with gas, and a Botanic Garden on a large scale is to be established there,” noted a writer for the *Liberator* (1831–1865) in 1846.¹⁷ The Britons also introduced British coin as the colonial currency, shared improved agricultural techniques, encouraged the building of “decent cottages,” and established a bank.¹⁸

Other efforts furthered the goal of fitting Africans into a Protestant, middle-class mold. In 1843, a writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* reported that “The people are now dressed in British manufactures, and make a very respectable

¹³ Thompson, 59; Paul Lancaster, “Champion Among the Heathen,” *American Heritage* (1978), 68.

¹⁴ “Southeastern Africa:—Journal of Mr. Champion,” *Miss. Her.* (November 1835), 414.

¹⁵ “South Africa. Kat River,” *Miss. Her.* (April 1834), 145.

¹⁶ “Southern Africa,” *Af. Repos.* (June 1, 1841), 174.

¹⁷ “Cape of Good Hope,” *Liberator* [Boston] (Aug. 28, 1846), 139.

¹⁸ [B. B. Thatcher], “Kay’s Travels in Caffraria,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (October 1834), 393; “The Cape of Good Hope,” *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 397, 400; “South Africa:—London Missionary Society,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (September 1836), 229.

appearance in the house of God.”¹⁹ The introduction of schools and printing presses helped encourage love of books among Africans—“There is nothing they take so much pleasure in as in reading,” reported the *African Repository*.²⁰ The British established temperance societies, and they tried to stop women’s labor in the fields.²¹ A writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* noted that Christian schools “prove a great blessing to those who attend” and that “Infant schools and adult schools are thriving.”²² And when a native African chief delivered an eloquent address without advanced preparation, a writer for the Baptist publication said that this demonstrated “the power of the gospel to subdue the savage heart and enlighten and refine savage intellect.”²³

American support for the British presence in South Africa was bolstered by reports that South Africans craved Western help. In his *Cruise of the United States Frigate Potomac Round the World, During the Years 1831–34*, Francis Warriner reported that a Tswana chief, having heard of missionary activities in the region, “set out on a journey to find Dr. Philip, taking with him a thousand head of cattle to purchase a missionary.”²⁴ In 1835, the *Liberator* published a Khoikhoi’s explanation of the benefits his people had derived from British missionaries:

¹⁹ “Other Societies:—South Africa; London Miss. Society,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (August 1843), 216.

²⁰ “Interesting School in South Africa,” *Af. Repos.* (April 1844), 110. The *Baptist Missionary Magazine* noted the popularity of “booksellers’ shops” in Cape Town (“Other Societies:—South Africa,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* [May 1842], 127).

²¹ “Religion in South Africa,” *Af. Repos.* (September 1833), 222; [Thatcher], “Kay’s Travels in Caffraria,” 393.

²² “South Africa:—London Missionary Society,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (September 1836), 229; “Other Societies:—South Africa,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (May 1842), 127.

²³ “Speech of the Chief Waterboer at Cape Town,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (April 1840), 91.

²⁴ Francis Warriner, *Cruise of the United States Frigate Potomac Round the World, During the Years 1831–34* (New-York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), 60.

When the missionaries came among us, we had no clothing but the filthy sheep-skin kaross; now we are clothed in British manufactures. We were here without letters; now we can read our bibles, or hear them read to us. We were without any religion; *now* we worship God in our families.²⁵

The Khoikhoi's gratitude held great appeal for white readers. The *Liberator* reprinted the article a month after its first appearance in the abolitionist publication, and the comments also appeared in Francis Warriner's book.²⁶ In 1840, readers of the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* read of Africans' eagerness for help from the West. Africans are "stretching forth their arms and crying out—"Come over and help us,"" a missionary quoted the native plea. "Every tribe in our neighborhood is begging for teachers."²⁷ Reverend Moffat agreed. "She wants our missionaries, our schoolmasters, our Bibles, all the machinery we possess for ameliorating her wretched condition," he insisted, in comments that appeared in the *African Repository* in 1843.²⁸

Some Americans, rather than fearing the large casualty rate and demoralization that often accompanied imperialism, predicted that the British would pursue an enlightened, "liberal" colonization in South Africa. In 1833, a writer for the *African Repository* asserted that the "British government is more enlightened and liberal than in past days." Signs of this liberality included the establishment of the aforementioned temperance societies, schools, and a printing press in South Africa, which suggested that the colony was "making more rapid advances toward

²⁵ "Hottentots," *Liberator* (Jan. 3, 1835), 4.

²⁶ "What have Missionaries Done for Hottentots?" *Liberator* (Feb. 14, 1835), 28; Warriner, 59.

²⁷ "Speech of the Chief Waterboer at Cape Town," *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (April 1840), 92.

²⁸ Rev. Robert Moffat, "Missionary Labors and Scenes in Southern Africa," *Af. Repos.* (February 1843), 46.

civilization” than any other part of “the unevangelized world.”²⁹ B. B. Thatcher, a writer for the *North American Review* and advocate of African repatriation in Liberia, was aware of the problems of Western colonization, and he noted that “the settlement of most parts of our country” had been “of little use and of great abuse to the natives.” But he was pleased to hear positive accounts of British efforts in South Africa. Acknowledging that “Colonies have always been the conductors of civilization the world over,” Thatcher envisioned a scenario in which colonization would be guided by “the reason, philanthropy and justice of a day like this in which we live.” He hoped that basing the “old system upon new principles” would bring about “an enlightened practical system of African Colonization.”³⁰

The British government’s successful and peaceful abolition of slavery in South Africa was strong evidence of liberal colonization, and American abolitionists regarded it as a model for American emancipation. “The colony is free from the evil of slavery,” missionary George Champion exulted in November 1835.³¹ The British government had increasingly tightened restrictions on the institution in the 1820s and early 1830s, and then made abolition final in 1833. Under the terms of the emancipation, freed slaves would serve as their masters’ apprentices for five years.³² On April 4, 1835, the *Liberator* published an article called “God Bless Great Britain” in which the author—“A Man of Color”—noted that in “every spot where waves a British flag,” the British government showed “strong sympathy and open arms to

²⁹ “Religion in South Africa,” *Af. Repos.* (September 1833), 222.

³⁰ [Thatcher], “Kay’s Travels in Caffraria,” 394; *DAB*, vol. 18, 393.

³¹ “Southeastern Africa:—Journal of Mr. Champion,” *Miss. Her.* (November 1835), 416.

³² Thompson, 57–58.

receive the man of color to share their benevolence.” For this reason, he wished “that God would bless this nation.”³³

Great Britain’s emancipation of slaves throughout its empire inspired antislavery Americans to urge their lawmakers to follow suit. The ease with which slavery was ended weakened the American proslavery argument that abolition would lead to chaos. According to the *Liberator*, emancipated Cape Colony slaves spent “the last remaining hours of their servitude in religious exercises,” and at midnight they “sung the hymn, ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow.’ ... A couple of days later, they prepared ‘an abundant repast’ for their former masters.” To the writer, the freedmen’s behavior demonstrated that “justice is politically safe—that there is no danger in doing right,” and he directly addressed the episode’s relevance to the United States. “Are these glorious examples to be lost on America?” he asked. “No man possessing any claim to the reputation of sanity, can now doubt the safety of immediate and unconditional emancipation.”³⁴ A writer for the *Southern Quarterly Review* (1842–1857) agreed that readers’ decisions about slavery “need not be disturbed by considerations of peril to the public peace.” “The Southern States are entirely secure from a general revolt,” he explained, basing his comments on British emancipation. “This security does not depend upon a strict police or a standing army ... but upon the general good feeling that prevails between the two classes.”³⁵

Other writers added their voices to the chorus. A *Missionary Herald* writer

³³ A Man of Color, “God Bless Great Britain,” *Liberator* (April 4, 1835), 54.

³⁴ “Emancipation in South Africa,” *Liberator* (April 26, 1839), 66.

³⁵ “Slavery in the United States,” *South. Qlty. Rev.* [New Orleans] (July 1847), 122–23.

noted that emancipated Khoikhoi “worked better than they had ever worked before” and that freed Africans were “not surpassed in industry in any part of the British dominions.” Their success demonstrated “the absurdity of all the hackneyed objections to the freedom of slaves,” he continued. “There is no class of men on earth more fit to be made free, than those who have been all their life in chains.”³⁶ A writer for the *Friend* also saw the similarities. “Are all these glorious examples to be lost upon America?” he asked in 1839, when the apprenticeships ended. “No man possessing any claim to the reputation of sanity, can now doubt the safety of immediate and unconditional emancipation.”³⁷ The proslavery *Southern Literary Messenger* did not comment on the emancipation.

The British in South Africa also fared well in many Americans’ opinions when they were compared with the Boers. Many Boers wanted to maintain their unfree labor force and were consequently upset with the British decision to emancipate. “Dutch boors are indignant with the missionaries,” the Reverend Samuel Dyer noted in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* in 1842. “And why? Because, say they, the missionaries have done them an irreparable injury. Oh! ... What they call injury is only justice to Africa.”³⁸ A *Christian Examiner* writer also noted that the abolition of slavery was not popular with everybody in the colony, but he added that the measure “can hardly fail, under judicious management, to conduce essentially to

³⁶ “London Society’s Mission in South Africa,” *Miss. Her.* (May 1834), 185.

³⁷ “Emancipation in South Africa,” *Friend* (April 20, 1839), 232.

³⁸ Quoted in “Other Societies:—South Africa,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (May 1842), 127.

the improvement of the agricultural as well as moral interest.”³⁹

Some American missionaries criticized the Boers for moving onto African tribal lands, which led to African retaliation. Boers migrated to lands beyond British control as a result of British antislavery laws. Beginning their Great Trek in 1836, they first settled along the Vaal River, on the land of the Ndebele kingdom, whose leader was Mzilikazi. The Ndebele attacked the new arrivals, but the Boers defeated them in January 1837.⁴⁰ Although some American missionaries asserted that they were “not disposed to attach blame to any one” in the conflict and noted that they would have been “in no way affected” by the Boers’ emigration “had Moselekatsi not attempted their entire destruction,” other missionaries blamed the Boers.⁴¹ David Lindley acknowledged that “Had they [the Boers] not come within his reach Moselekatsi would not have attacked them,”⁴² and Rufus Anderson, director of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, referred in his memoirs to “the wars of the Dutch Boers upon the natives.”⁴³

Americans outside the religious community agreed that the Boers were the aggressors. Many Americans already had a low opinion of them. The *African Repository* quoted Lieutenant Cowper Rose, who recalled that the Boers “slaughtered without mercy” when they had controlled South Africa.⁴⁴ In the *North American Review*, B. B. Thatcher deemed the Boers “extremely ignorant and rude, remote from

³⁹ “The Cape of Good Hope,” *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 400–01.

⁴⁰ Thompson, 88–90; Lancaster, “Champion Among the Heathen,” 74.

⁴¹ “Southern Africa:—Letter from the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (October 1837), 420.

⁴² “Southern Africa:—Letter from Mr. Lindley,” *Miss. Her.* (May 1838), 180.

⁴³ Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: The Board, 1861), 240.

⁴⁴ “Review,” *Af. Repos.* (July 1834), 199.

the supervision of even the colonial government, and living in the most scattered manner conceivable ... Unquestionably the first aggressions, and those extremely violent," he asserted, referring to the Dutch emigrants, "were on the part of the whites."⁴⁵

Some Americans continued to focus on Boer depredations even when Zulus could be portrayed as the aggressors. In 1838, the Zulu chief Dingan lured seventy unarmed Boers into his *kraal*, or village; once inside, the Boers were murdered. The American Peace Society's *Advocate of Peace* (1837–1906) noted that the "community have been startled" by reports—distinctly anti-African—that described a "massacre of the Dutch boers by a tribe near the Cape of Good Hope." But the *Advocate of Peace* writer insisted that, although the Zulus had attacked the Boers, the Boers were far from blameless. Zulu violence reacted to Dutch deprecations, and therefore should be blamed on proslavery Boers. As an example, the Reverend Dr. J. P. Smith told the London Peace Society that after the Boers moved inland, "beyond the reach of British law," they "prevailed upon an aboriginal tribe to join them in their marauding expedition against the Soolah tribe." The Dutch emigrants, however, turned on their new allies, killing some and enslaving the rest. The Boers decided "to murder all their unhappy black associates," Smith related. "They sent back a detachment to drive into slavery the wives and children of that tribe; and then they proceeded to the Soolahs, and inflicted upon them plunder and murder to the widest extent."⁴⁶ Given such anti-African violence, how could one single out Zulus as the aggressors?

⁴⁵ [Thatcher], "Kay's Travels in Caffraria," 383.

⁴⁶ "London Peace Society," *Adv. of Peace* [Washington, D. C.] (October 1838), 108–09.

And American missionaries demonstrated a strong preference for Britons over Boers. In 1839, Lindley and Newton Adams considered it a sign of the "wisdom" of Dingaan, another tribal leader, that he "would have nothing more to do with the Boers; he would only treat with the English," whom they deemed "the responsible party."⁴⁷ To a large extent, such sentiments derived from their belief that the British could establish and maintain peace and order. Violence was causing many American missionaries to leave South Africa at this time, as they could not do their work in the tumultuous atmosphere.⁴⁸ In the spring of 1839, the *Missionary Herald* was reporting the return of several missionaries to Boston, due to the "unhappy state of the Zulu people, in consequence of the contests between them and the Dutch farmers."⁴⁹

Some Americans criticized the Dutch for not working as hard as they could to convert Africans to Christianity. Again, the British benefited from the comparison. A writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* noted that missionaries made "little progress" among the Khoikhoi in Dutch-controlled South Africa, in contrast with more impressive results when the colony "came into the final possession of the British."⁵⁰ In 1843, a writer for the *Advocate of Peace* criticized Boers for their violence against Africans while they claimed to be Christians. The writer quoted British Quaker minister James Backhouse, who cited "the incursion of the colonial

⁴⁷ "Southern Africa:—Letter from Mr. Lindley and Doct. Adams," *Miss. Her.* (October 1839), 385; Myra Dinnerstein, "The American Zulu Mission in the Nineteenth Century: Clash Over Customs," *Church History* (1976), 235.

⁴⁸ Lancaster, "Champion Among the Heathen," 77; Amanda Porterfield, "The Impact of Early New England Missionaries on Women's Roles in Zulu Culture," *Church History* (1997), 67.

⁴⁹ Quote from "Recent Intelligence," *Miss. Her.* (April 1839), 157; "Recent Intelligence," *Miss. Her.* (May 1839), 189.

⁵⁰ "Other Societies:—South Africa," *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (May 1842), 127.

Boers among the nations of South Africa” as having, at its root, “the inconsistency of war with the gospel.” In Backhouse’s opinion, Dutch emigrants’ actions belied their assertions that they were good Christians. “The Cape Colonial Boers,” he noted, “make a higher profession of Christianity” and “entertain a higher regard for the New Testament” than the French or British. But if they were true Christians, he pointed out, they would not be “threatening destruction” to Africans who were being Christianized. “If their teachers had inculcated the peaceableness of the gospel as one of its principles,” Backhouse insisted, “the state of things now existing never would have taken place.”⁵¹

American missionaries believed that British rule was their best hope if they were to continue their work in South Africa—neither Zulu nor Boer rule would do. If Dingan were not conquered, his “jealousy of white men,” they explained in a joint letter, would prevent them from being able to return to their “forsaken field.” “Should the Boers take and keep possession of it,” they continued, they could only become “instructors to those who already pride themselves on being Christians.” But “Should the authority of the British government be there established, and should the natives ... find themselves comfortably settled; we might enter an encouraging field, and be protected in our labors.”⁵² Soon, the British eliminated the threat of continued rule under Dingan. Reporting in the summer of 1839 that the Zulu leader had fled, the American Board saw the possibility that “the way may soon be opened for the return

⁵¹ “Anniversary of the London Peace Society,” *Adv. of Peace* (August 1843), 91.

⁵² “Southern Africa:—Joint Letter from the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (February 1839), 50.

of missionaries to the remnants of Dingaan's people who may be left in the country."⁵³ The next year, the *Missionary Herald* reported that there was peace in South Africa, and asked for more missionaries to be sent.⁵⁴

American missionaries hoped that the Natal province would become part of the British empire, because such control would facilitate their work. A *Missionary Herald* writer reported in 1839 that it was "very probable" that the British government would make Natal "a dependency of the crown," and was pleased with the possibility. "We have reason to believe that the interests of the natives will be suitably regarded," he wrote, "and that every facility will be afforded to missionaries which they can desire."⁵⁵ A writer for the *Missionary Herald* explained that British control of Natal province was a change of a "favorable character" because British oversight would stabilize the region.⁵⁶ And American missionary Aldin Grout asserted that "When the English government is firmly established [in South Africa], and the Zulus understand it well, [the Zulus] will not, they cannot throw insurmountable obstacles in our way."⁵⁷

Accompanying these beliefs were American missionaries' earnest assurances that Africans under British control would be safe and happy. A writer for the *Missionary Herald* deemed "just and humane" the House of Commons resolutions "to recommend to his majesty's benevolent care the state of the Hottentots and free

⁵³ "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," *Miss. Her.* (July 1839), 268.

⁵⁴ "Recent Intelligence," *Miss. Her.* (August 1840), 331.

⁵⁵ "Southern Africa:—Letter from Mr. Lindley and Doct. Adams," *Miss. Her.* (October 1839), 386.

⁵⁶ "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," *Miss. Her.* (June 1844), 181.

⁵⁷ "Southern Africa:—Letter from Mr. Grout," *Miss. Her.* (February 1843), 79.

people of color of every denomination.”⁵⁸ In 1842, Grout had “not the slightest doubt” that Natal would “immediately come under the English government.” He also believed that the British were coming to Natal partly “to protect the rights of the natives” and that the British government would allow Dingan’s holdings to pass to his successor as Zulu leader, Mpande.⁵⁹ When the possession was formally proclaimed, a *Missionary Herald* writer noted that the move “may be expected to give more stability to political affairs in that quarter,” and Newton Adams regarded the native population of Umlazi, in Port Natal, as “permanent and safe under the protection of the English government.”⁶⁰

Enhancing the notion of safety under the British were assurances that theirs would not be a racist rule. In May 1844, the *Missionary Herald* reported that the Cape Colony governor had decided that, in Natal, “No distinction shall be founded upon color” and “Slavery shall not be tolerated in any form.”⁶¹ News of the annexation led other Americans to celebrate the creation of the colorblind colony. After Natal was secured as part of the empire, the *African Repository* noted that the province—which had been “much neglected”—would thereafter be managed with “an equality of rights with which neither color, origin, language or creed, can interfere; and a total extinction of slavery within its bounds.”⁶² And in his 1910 history of the American Board, editorial secretary William E. Strong noted that, in British-ruled Natal,

⁵⁸ “Miscellanies,” *Miss. Her.* (September 1835), 354.

⁵⁹ “Southern Africa:—Letters from Mr. Grout,” *Miss. Her.* (August 1842), 340; Porterfield, “Impact of New England Missionaries,” 67.

⁶⁰ “Letter from Doct. Adams, 15th Feb., 1842,” *Miss. Her.* (August 1842), 341.

⁶¹ “South Africa:—Letter of Mr. Grout,” *Miss. Her.* (May 1844), 153.

⁶² “Cape of Good Hope,” *Af. Repos.* (October 1843), 322.

“Justice was now to be even-handed, without distinction of color and with laws protecting the rights of all.”⁶³

Some members of the American Board temporarily considered that British control of Natal should serve as their cue to exit the colony. Ultimately, however, they decided to remain and enjoy unprecedented access to the native population. Early in 1842, the colony’s unsettled state had led the American Board to question “the propriety of continuing the mission.”⁶⁴ In its annual survey of missions under American Board auspices, the *Missionary Herald* in January 1844 reported the Board’s decision to leave South Africa. Board members feared that the colony’s “unsettled state” would hamper mission efforts and were also leery of potential “conflicting interests” between Britons and Americans there. An additional reason to leave was the likelihood that more British missionaries would be arriving, rendering an American presence there unnecessary. David Lindley thought that Natal becoming a British colony would make “English men, women, and children emigrate ... to this country,” which would “attract the attention of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and be the means of bringing here, at least, a respectable number of the society’s missionaries.”⁶⁵ American Board resources were limited, and they knew that they could be used elsewhere.⁶⁶

But then American missionaries began to see opportunities for cooperation. In the summer of 1844, Aldin Grout insisted that there was “hardly a mission of greater

⁶³ William E. Strong, *The Story of the American Board* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910), 136.

⁶⁴ “Other Societies:—Am. Board of Com. for For. Missions,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (February 1842), 36.

⁶⁵ “Southern Africa:—Letter from Mr. Lindley,” *Miss. Her.* (February 1843), 80.

⁶⁶ “Survey of the Missions of the Board,” *Miss. Her.* (January 1844), 2.

promise” than was found in Natal. “Except at the Sandwich Islands,” he insisted, “our missionaries cannot collect such congregations, or have such unrestrained intercourse with the people.”⁶⁷ Grout, Adams, and Lindley ended up working as missionaries for the Cape government.⁶⁸ The 1845 report reflected this growing optimism. The Board decided not to leave; believing that they could still do important work in the colony, they asked, “how can the Board withdraw from that field?”⁶⁹ Grout came to see British control of South Africa as providential and reported that he was happy with the arrangements. “All which the English government has done for me, as well as the manner of doing it, has been most commendable and honorable,” he insisted in 1845. “Altogether worthy of a Christian government.”⁷⁰

Rather than focusing on the possibility of being edged out by British missionaries, American missionaries came to see a British-controlled colony as creating “decidedly favorable” circumstances for them, because they would have “free access” to approximately one hundred thousand natives.⁷¹ Subsequent surveys of the South Africa mission praised the British government’s “liberal” approach to governing Africans and noted the continued cooperation between the British government and American missionaries. The 1847 report noted that the colonial government consulted with Americans, and it characterized the colonial rulers as having developed their arrangements “in respect to the natives ... in a spirit of liberal

⁶⁷ “South Africa:—Letters from Mr. Grout,” *Miss. Her.* (June 1844), 183.

⁶⁸ “Recent Intelligence,” *Miss. Her.* (August 1844), 286.

⁶⁹ “Survey of the Missions of the Board,” *Miss. Her.* (January 1845), 2.

⁷⁰ “Recent Intelligence,” *Miss. Her.* (December 1845), 419.

⁷¹ “Survey of the Missions of the Board,” *Miss. Her.* (January 1846), 2.

philanthropy.”⁷² Two of the five commissioners that the British government appointed “to locate the aborigines” were American missionaries. And the 1848 report reiterated that the government’s policy was “exceedingly liberal and praiseworthy,” and that the colony’s lieutenant governor “pledges every thing to the colored people which the most enlightened philanthropy could demand.”⁷³

Other Americans, meanwhile, were less sanguine about the accomplishments of British and American missionaries—or any Westerners at all—in South Africa. They questioned assertions that whites were bringing a much-needed light to a culturally dark people. A popular perception of the colonial relationship held that Africa’s “long night is drawing to a close” and that “[its] western, southern, and eastern borders are beginning to be fringed with the morning light.”⁷⁴ To challenge this image of an African midnight, Americans who were skeptical of British imperialism—while clinging to notions of racial prejudice, rather than challenging them—asserted that the Khoikhoi were lighter-skinned than was generally believed. In 1835, a writer for the *Liberator* characterized Khoikhoi skin as “yellow brown. Many are nearly as white as Europeans.” He also noted that they “bear a physical resemblance sufficiently striking to the Chinese,” that young Khoikhoi women “might serve as perfect models of the human figure,” and that they were “a mild, quiet, and timid people; perfectly harmless, honest and [faithful].” A writer for the publication

⁷² “Survey of the Missions of the Board,” *Miss. Her.* (January 1847), 2.

⁷³ “Survey of the Missions of the Board,” *Miss. Her.* (January 1848), 2.

⁷⁴ “Miscellany:—Moffat’s Southern Africa,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (May 1843), 106.

explained that he included the description because it “is so very different from the idea generally entertained respecting them.”⁷⁵ The juxtaposition of physical features with behavior suggests that writers saw a correlation between the two, or thought that their readers would. In the *North American Review*, B. B. Thatcher reported that Xhosa were “a well-formed, decent-featured, and comely people.” He also noted that, although Xhosa “hair is woolly and their color dark brown,” that their “countenances are more European than African.” Lacking “the smallest resemblance to the negroes in either conformation or features,” Thatcher predicted that they were of Arab origin.⁷⁶

Africans were also portrayed as being lesser Europeans. Although such comparisons are objectionable by modern standards, they were intended to advance the African cause by suggesting that there was significant potential for African uplift. These comments also reveal that imperial perceptions hinged not only on notions of nationality, race, and religion, but also on the concept of class. Recalling his cruise around the world, Francis Warriner noted that John Philip of the London Missionary Society considered Xhosa and Khoikhoi to be “decidedly superior to that portion of the refuse English population which migrate to the Cape.” Warriner insisted that the expression “worse than a Hottentot”—used to describe someone who was “below the level of humanity”—was unfair to Khoikhoi, although he gave credit for their uplift to the British when he assured his readers that Khoikhoi “are not the degraded beings

⁷⁵ “Hottentots,” *Liberator* (Jan. 3, 1835), 4.

⁷⁶ [Thatcher], “Kay’s Travels in Caffraria,” 372.

that they once were.”⁷⁷ James Backhouse, whose comments were printed in the *Friend*, insisted that “Many of the half-naked, degraded Hottentots have been raised to a state nearly equal to that of the labouring class of England, and in some respects superior.”⁷⁸ And British missionary Robert Moffat predicted that they would rise higher yet. “I know African hearts and African heads,” he asserted in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*. “And I know that there are materials there, which only want working, to make the African head equal to the head of the European.”⁷⁹

While writers could portray Africans as moving up in the racial hierarchy, Westerners in Africa risked moving down. In South Africa, British and Dutch settlers who lived beyond government control were likened to Africans. In *Travels and Research in Caffraria*, Stephen Kay noted that the term “grown black” was used to describe British men who “domiciled themselves among the native tribes” and as a result “soon become deaf to the checks of better principles.” Although the phrase originated in Guinea, Kay saw the same phenomenon in South Africa, where one could find “Englishmen whose daily garb differs little from the beast-hide covering of their savage neighbors; whose proper color can scarcely be identified from the filth that covers them.” The *African Repository* staff member who reviewed Kay’s book went on to quote the author’s observation that “lawless colonists, English as well as Dutch,” lived “beyond colonial precincts” in South Africa, and that sometimes in exchanges between Britons and Xhosa, “the terms ‘civilized and savage,’ appear to

⁷⁷ Warriner, 57–58.

⁷⁸ “South Africa,” *Friend* (May 22, 1841), 268.

⁷⁹ “Other Societies:—London Missionary Society,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (December 1840), 297.

have changed sides.”⁸⁰

Notions that some South Africans were light-skinned accompanied a willingness by many Americans to consider that Westerners’ presence in Africa had been more detrimental than beneficial. Rather than celebrating the benefits of Christianity, they emphasized the corrupting influence of colonization. They tended to perceive Africans before contact not as degraded beings in need of redemption, but as a simple people untainted by civilization. Recalling his visit to the region in 1828, Captain Benjamin Morrell described Africans as “honest and inoffensive; being in a state of nature, and having never studied the arts of deceitful villany which are practised so successfully by the children of civilization.”⁸¹ In the 1834 *New-Hampshire Observer*, “PRESBUTEROS” expressed his wish for South African natives to avoid exposure to “the unholy lives of a nominally christian community.” He recommended that missionaries proselytize in “the interior where the natives have not been thus corrupted, and prejudiced against christianity, and where they will be more accessible to the truth ... without the counteracting influence, which must necessarily be felt in the vicinity of a colony.”⁸² The *African Repository* carried a British soldier’s complaint of his country’s presence in the colony: “If we find them simple and trusting, we leave them treacherous; if we find them temperate, we leave them drunkards; and in after-years, a plea for their destruction is founded on the very

⁸⁰ “Review,” *Af. Repos.* (September 1834), 203, 202.

⁸¹ Morrell, 287.

⁸² PRESBUTEROS, “Conversion of Africa,” *Liberator* (Nov. 15, 1834), 184. Reprinted from the *New-Hampshire Observer*.

vices they have learned from us!”⁸³

Many Americans who did not identify exclusively with white, middle-class Protestants also insisted that Africans only turned violent against Westerners in response to Western provocation. In the *Advocate of Peace*, James Backhouse insisted that one could travel safely through South Africa unarmed. Bringing no weapons demonstrated to Africans that visitors trusted them, and Europeans who showed such trust were able to live safely among San and Xhosa and even to secure treaties.⁸⁴ Although an English boy had observed that the Xhosa were “rather given to stealing,” some Americans saw native pilfering as understandable.⁸⁵ In the *North American Review*, B. B. Thatcher admitted that Xhosa did not regard stealing as a sin. But he did not blame them for the predilection. “Perhaps this preëminence,” he suggested, “may be fairly attributed in a great measure to the nature of the intercourse he has held for a century and a half with his profligate European neighbors, and especially to the depredations and other injuries he has suffered at their hands.”⁸⁶

Some Americans found the British presence in South Africa truly ominous. “It requires no prophecy to decide the result,” insisted a writer for the *Christian Examiner* in 1835. “The Caffer territory will be overrun by English troops, as it was in 1819 ... their villages devastated, and their cattle driven off.” Once the British had asserted their superiority, the Xhosa would be forced to cede their land to them. Xhosa, “or their chiefs, or some of them, will be ready to sign new treaties, and make

⁸³ “Review,” *Af. Repos.* (July 1834), 203.

⁸⁴ Addresses at the Annual Meeting of the London Peace Society,” *Adv. of Peace* (February 1842), 115–16.

⁸⁵ “Foreign Ecclesiastical Intelligence,” *Cath. Tel.* (Aug. 24, 1844), 266.

⁸⁶ [Thatcher], “Kay’s Travels in Caffraria,” 380.

new cessions, while the civilized party will of course be abundantly able to maintain the validity of the conveyance by arms or argument, proclamation or 'commando,' as the circumstances happen to require," the writer contended.⁸⁷

Many Americans compared the South African situation not with a previous episode in the territory but with a more personal memory. They could not help but see a melancholy similarity between the Africans' situation and the plight of Indians in their own country. And they hoped that the American Indians' fate did not portend the outcome for South Africans. In 1834, a writer for *The African Repository* and B. B. Thatcher in the *North American Review* both quoted an *Edinburgh Review* writer who suggested that British atrocities in South Africa "rival any thing we have read of the conduct of certain States of North America towards the native Indians!" The *African Repository* writer also quoted Stephen Kay's observation that the "forcible expulsion" of the Xhosa from their land "remind[s] us most forcibly of the treatment of the Creek and Cherokee Indians."⁸⁸ Just a few months later, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* admitted that South African missionaries had demonstrated "a practical good sense which has not uniformly characterized similar movements in other countries, and least of all perhaps among the early Indians of our own." The writer went on to admit that "farther progress of the colonial settlements" in South Africa would "probably prove fatal" to the San, and he suggested that "the history of the conquests and settlements made in North and South America" would approximate the South African endgame.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ "The Cape of Good Hope," *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 390-91.

⁸⁸ [Thatcher], "Kay's Travels in Caffraria," 384; "Review," *Af. Repos.* (September 1834), 200, 201-02.

⁸⁹ "The Cape of Good Hope," *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 399.

Missionaries, including American Board director Rufus Anderson, feared that Africans might share the Indians' fate, and for this reason he wanted Africans to build their own Christian communities, initially guided by Western missionaries, rather than be descended upon by large numbers of white settlers.⁹⁰

Yet Americans who dwelled on the dwindling numbers of South African natives were not entirely sentimental when they noted their resemblance to Indians. The *Christian Examiner* writer quoted above who saw the similarity between San and Native Americans characterized San as "a troglodyte and warlike race" and saw their "ferocious spirit" as akin to "that of the American Indians."⁹¹ In 1837, American missionaries expressed concern that increased British settlement in Natal would force Africans "to give way to the wishes and interests of white men," as had happened at home. "We cannot think of the American Indians and of the natives of this country," they admitted, "without fearing that years of missionary labor may yet be sacrificed to what is called the enterprise of civilized man."⁹² But rather than challenge the threat, they accepted that many Africans, like the Indians before them, would die off, and that missionaries must simply convert whom they could. "If the pagan tribes in Africa and North America cannot be made christian and civilized communities, but must gradually melt away before the colonizing propensities of the white race," they stated in the August 1838 *Missionary Herald*, "we must at least make the zealous and

⁹⁰ Norman A. Etherington, "An American Errand into the South African Wilderness," *Church History* (1970), 63.

⁹¹ "The Cape of Good Hope," *Chr. Exam.* (January 1835), 399.

⁹² "Southern Africa:—Letter from the Missionaries," *Miss. Her.* (October 1837), 421.

persevering endeavor to bring home the salvation of the gospel to as many individuals among them as possible.”⁹³

While some skeptical Americans emphasized the negative aspects of colonization, others questioned whether the benefits of imperialism were as great as they were skeptically. Alongside the sunny testimony of such publications as the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, which contended that accounts of missionary efforts in the Cape Colony “[fell] short of conveying ... the great work which is going on at these Institutions,” writers for the *Catholic Telegraph* maintained that the missionaries’ impact on the colony was neither as extensive nor as beneficial as Protestant sources suggested.⁹⁴ In 1839, the journal noted that a Protestant visitor to South Africa found missionary efforts among Khoikhoi and Xhosa “entirely inadequate to the purpose, and based upon false principles.” These missionaries, “sombre and sad themselves ... destroy the natural gaiety of the people, whom they seek to convert.” Meanwhile, each sect enforced its specific dogma, “often to the detriment of the great foundations of all christian faith.”⁹⁵ The journal also reported when Dr. Griffith, vicar-apostolic of the Cape of Good Hope, lamented that the British government “refused to erect for us a little oratory at Grahamstown, where the most numerous and nearest congregation resides.”⁹⁶

In 1844, a writer for the *Catholic Telegraph* insisted that many of the publicized British successes in the colony had never actually been achieved. The

⁹³ “South Africa:—General Letter from the Missionaries,” *Miss. Her.* (August 1838), 307.

⁹⁴ “South Africa—London Missionary Society,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (September 1836), 232.

⁹⁵ “Africa,” *Cath. Tel.* (Jan. 3, 1839), 31.

⁹⁶ “Missions of Africa,” *Cath. Tel.* (April 23, 1842), 134.

journal noted that the Reverend T. B. Freeman had visited London to collect money for the mission. But a Methodist missionary who had spent two years in the Cape Colony, upon his return to Great Britain, reported that “*many of the statements made regarding that mission are grossly exaggerated—some of them positively false.*”

For example, a statement is made by Mr. Freeman in the report of the society for 1840 and 41, that *ground was cleared* for a coffee plantation at Dominasi, and towards which Mr. Freeman received 100*l.* from the “African Civilisation Society,” which place I visited *a year after*, and found that *not one inch of ground was even then actually cleared, nor one coffee tree planted.* ... in the report for 1842–43 it is stated that “the mission school in Kumasi *is in successful operation,*” when *at the time* no such school was in existence, nor had one ever been commenced.

Another missionary reported that some of his brethren tolerated “horrid immoralities and most scandalous violation of the Christian religion.” The *Catholic Telegraph* informed readers “*That concubinage is tolerated by the Wesleyan Missionaries, and practiced by the members of their societies; and that both males and females, cohabiting together unmarried, are admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.*”⁹⁷ And this was not the most disturbing accusation of immorality among Protestant missionaries. The *Catholic Telegraph* also reported the story of a Baptist minister, “one of the cleverest, most sanctimonious, and ostentatious of the pseudo-missionaries that infect the eastern districts,” who pled guilty to “the attempt to commit ... a nameless offence with his own pupils and others.”⁹⁸

And while the *Catholic Telegraph* found holes in the accounts of missionary success, other publications emphasized the harshness of British governance in South

⁹⁷ [Untitled], *Cath. Tel.* (Nov. 30, 1844), 383.

⁹⁸ “To the Editor of the Tablet,” *Cath. Tel.* (April 27, 1844), 131.

Africa. A writer for the *African Repository* noted that Stephen Kay mocked British use of the term “*cession*” to refer to the “forcible expulsion” of Xhosa from their territory. The reviewer also quoted an African chief who had received British aid but still considered the British to be “*oppressive*” because they exiled Africans from their land. And the methods of exile were ugly. Kay did not consider the British to have been guilty of “*wanton cruelty*” in South Africa, but he did note that, when Africans were being moved off their land, orders were given “that all Caffers appearing within the proclaimed line should be shot.” “The duty of the Commando was to destroy, to burn the habitations, and to seize the cattle, and they *did their duty*,” agreed Cowper Rose, whose recollections and laments of his *Four Years in South Africa* also appeared in the article. “I hate the policy that turns the English soldier into the cold-blooded butcher of the unresisting native.”⁹⁹ In his review of Kay’s book for the *North American Review*, Thatcher also quoted Rose’s comments about British destruction. “Unfortunately, the English, although only thirty years in possession of the colony, have during that short period outstripped, in their horrible oppression of the natives, even the cold-blooded cruelties of the Dutch boors of the last century,” Thatcher wrote. “No British traveller has denied this, so far as we know, and most of them confirm it in explicit terms.”¹⁰⁰

When providing news about South Africa, some American publications simply reprinted pro-British updates. When they editorialized, however, they sometimes revealed quite different sentiments. The *Working Man’s Advocate* and the

⁹⁹ “Review,” *Af. Repos.* (September 1834), 201, 199–200.

¹⁰⁰ [Thatcher], “Kay’s Travels in Caffraria,” 384, 383.

Liberator published pro-British updates on the Cape Colony during the period under review. On February 28, 1835, subscribers to the *Working Man's Advocate* read that "the Caffrees were causing much trouble. They had come down from the interior, attacked the villages in the neighborhood of Cape Town, and killed many of the inhabitants."¹⁰¹ The paper continued to blame Africans for violence between natives and colonists. Two months later, it reported that "one of the Caffre Chiefs had commenced a sanguinary war on the Colonists, murdered many of their farmers, burnt their houses, carried off their cattle, &c. The survivors fled to Graham town for safety. ... The inhabitants of Cape town were raising funds for the relief of the distressed Colonists."¹⁰² Although the publication repeatedly decried imperialism as exploitative—and chided the British government for not attending to domestic concerns—the *Working Man's Advocate* never specifically criticized the British in South Africa.¹⁰³ This departure may serve as a warning of the perils of generalizing about the opinions of any one group, or even any single person. And certainly, some episodes within the empire outraged Americans more than others. But other possible explanations exist. For American editors, mainstream British papers would have been the most accessible sources of news about the British empire. Faced with more immediate concerns—such as domestic labor relations and antislavery efforts—editors may not have dwelled on the tone of reprinted updates on distant events. Or,

¹⁰¹ "From Canton, &c.," *Wkng. Man's Adv.* (Feb. 28, 1835).

¹⁰² "From the Cape of Good Hope," *Wkng. Man's Adv.* (May 9, 1835).

¹⁰³ An example of an anti-imperial article in the *Working Man's Advocate* would be "Remarks of Mr. Commerford" (March 30, 1844). Commerford criticized the British government for waging colonial wars and spending so much money on its empire. But South African conflicts were not as prominent as those elsewhere, and South Africa was a comparatively inexpensive colony.

editors may have had to accept the accounts until they received reports presented from a different perspective.

Articles on South Africa that appeared in the abolitionist journal the *Liberator* demonstrate that an editing staff might reprint updates from one perspective and yet hold different views themselves, or at least come to regard those accounts as unfair. Although the *Liberator*, like the *Working Man's Advocate*, repeatedly reprinted brief, pro-Western updates on South African conflicts, the paper editorialized in support of the Africans. In 1838, *Liberator* readers were informed of “the murder of 270 Dutch emigrants, men, women and children, by a chief of the Zoola country named Dingaan, in the vicinity of Port Natal.” The account, quoted from the *Commercial Advertiser*—which quoted the *Grahamstown (South Africa) Journal*—continued that “They had gone thither intending to settle, having been invited by the chief himself, and, until the murder, treated with every appearance of friendship.”¹⁰⁴ And in 1846 the publication reprinted “melancholy tidings of another outbreak among the Caffres, which had been accompanied by several conflicts with the colonists.”¹⁰⁵ In an editorial a month later, however, the *Liberator* found the colonists more at fault than the Africans, by noting the incompatibility of the Western messages of violence and Christian love. “In almost every contest between civilized and savage people,” the editor explained, “the first and greatest wrongs have been inflicted by the former and suffered by the latter. The Caffers are not likely to be Christianized by missionaries who advocate war, sent by churches which advocate war, and belonging to a country that is constantly

¹⁰⁴ “From South Africa,” *Liberator* (July 13, 1838), 111.

¹⁰⁵ “Arrival of the Cambria,” *Liberator* (July 24, 1846), 119.

engaged in war with some nation, and frequently with the very nation to which they pretend to be sending the gospel.”¹⁰⁶

British suppression of the Xhosa in the late 1840s sparked additional American opposition. One of the greatest weapons of the British in South Africa was the power of the pen, as they were able to describe interactions with South Africans as they chose. But this approach was not foolproof. The *African Repository* included the most extensive defense of the Xhosa in the ongoing Xhosa-British conflict, which came from a report of the British Aborigines' Protection Society. Most accounts of the conflict, the Society member had explained to his audience in London's Crosby Hall, were written from a pro-colonial point of view and therefore emphasized “the great and general alarm which was felt in the colony, as well as the heavy losses sustained by the colonists, and the arduous service imposed on them, in order to repel the invasion.” These accounts portrayed Xhosa as the aggressors, but the speaker offered the Xhosa perspective. Although he did not suggest that the natives were blameless, he pointed out that they had done nothing to justify a British attack, that the British were the ones to declare war, and that the Xhosa repeatedly tried to end the conflict.¹⁰⁷

He considered it “a serious error, and great injustice, to the Caffre tribes, to represent ... that the war was commenced by them.” Xhosa were, he admitted, ready to rebel against their colonial rulers. “As the Caffre youth grew up,” they knew that “their countrymen, though humbled, had not been entirely defeated” in the past war.

¹⁰⁶ “Cape of Good Hope,” *Liberator* (Aug. 28, 1846), 139.

¹⁰⁷ “British Opinions about Liberia,” *Af. Repos.* (December 1847), 357.

They had grievances and “a large amount of European arms,” and the influence of “disaffected individuals” further promoted “the general rising of the Caffre tribes on the occurrence of any untoward event.” But they were not to blame. The Xhosa chief refused a British request to surrender a member of his tribe who was accused of stealing an axe, a refusal that was within his rights. “Though by treaty obliged to surrender a cattle stealer, or a murderer, he was not required to give up one accused of the theft of such an article as an axe.” As a result of the refusal, however, the British lieutenant-governor declared war.¹⁰⁸

Although the British had begun the war, many Westerners regarded the Xhosa as the aggressors. The speaker pointed out that the Xhosa chief “subsequently offered to surrender the prisoner; and ... in the progress of the war, many attempts have been made by other chiefs to bring it to a close,” but such facts were rarely reported. Instead, reports “speak of acts committed by the Caffres when in a state of open war, and with peace refused them, in the same terms as if they were engaged in plundering incursions upon a peaceful neighbor.” In war, depredations were to be expected. “Whilst our troops are slaughtering Caffres wherever they can be seen, and carrying off their cattle by hundreds and by thousands,” he explained, “it is not to be expected that the Caffre warriors, when driven to extremity, should refrain from capturing in their turn, some of the colonial cattle when they fall within their power.”¹⁰⁹

The best-known motivations guiding British imperialism in the Cape Colony

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 357, 358.

and Natal in South Africa were not financial. Although the colony served as a stopping point for trade, news about the colony focused on British efforts to bring Christianity and order rather than the pursuit of wealth. But these benevolent motivations did not bring about the liberal and non-controversial colonization for which many Americans hoped. The Reverend Robert Moffat may have assured some readers of the *African Repository* when he insisted in 1843 that “There is yet hope for Africa. The deep groan of her untold sorrows, has been responded to by the British heart.”¹¹⁰ But to many Americans who followed the story—often those who knew something of oppression themselves—the Africans’ untold sorrows had just begun.

¹¹⁰ Rev. Robert Moffat, “Missionary Labors and Scenes in Southern Africa,” *Af. Repos.* (February 1843), 44.

CHAPTER V THE MOSQUITO COAST, 1848–1860

A British lion and an American eagle fought over a bone in a *Harper's Weekly* cartoon in January 1859. The bone represented Nicaragua. When the “roguish lion ... slyly endeavors to drag the Bone along with him,” wrote the cartoonist, the eagle pounces, “justly indignant.” The cartoon addressed Anglo-American tensions that had resulted from the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, which had been a bone of contention between the powers ever since the 1850 document was signed. Americans thought that the treaty would facilitate their construction of a canal through Nicaragua, but the British had a different interpretation. As a result, it seemed like a canal might never be built.¹

As the cartoon suggests, Americans bitterly opposed British attempts to control Nicaragua in the 1850s. An isthmian canal would bring China's market and California's gold closer to New England, New York, and New Orleans, and could potentially make the United States the world's commercial center. But easier access for Americans would mean fiercer competition for the British. Great Britain, however, could potentially control the isthmian transit route through its protectorate of Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast. The protectorate gave the British control of the region in which the canal's eastern terminus would be located. They could therefore

¹ “Pictorial History of the Famous Central American Bone, Likewise of the Lion, and the Eagle, and the Cock, and the Filibuster who Quarreled About the Bone,” *Harper's Wkly.* (Jan. 8, 1859), 20.

forbid its use, if they so chose. And even if they approved construction of a canal, which was doubtful, they would set the terms under which Americans used it. Americans were appalled at this potential check on their expansion. Because British expansion here threatened American expansion so gravely, Americans opposed British imperialism on the Mosquito Coast more strongly than in any other example in this study.

While the lion and eagle dueled, the British and Americans—like the cartoonist—showed limited concern or respect for the object of their competition. The cartoonist represented Great Britain and the United States as animals, but he portrayed Nicaragua as a bone—an inanimate object. The *Harper's* staff member was not the only American who considered Nicaraguans to be the least important participants in the struggle, or who thought of them as having little or no agency, even though the conflict affected them most.

Because isthmian transit could greatly facilitate westward expansion, manifest destiny pervaded Americans' perceptions of the Nicaraguan situation. In the words of John O'Sullivan, founder of the *Democratic Review*, it was America's mission "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."² By threatening to prevent American expansion, the British were not just perceived as challenging Americans—they were challenging God's will. Also, such a mission—coupled with the notion of "uplifting" those whom one

² Quoted in Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), xi.

encountered—suggested that manifest destiny was a kinder form of imperialism. Because such expansion could bring profit without profit being the explicit goal, Americans could do well while doing good.

In an 1823 statement that became known as the Monroe Doctrine, President James Monroe asserted that the Americas were off limits to future colonization and that the United States government would regard any colonizing actions in the Western Hemisphere as threats to American peace and safety.³ In this spirit, Americans, referring to manifest destiny, asserted that those who ruled Nicaragua had to be American rather than British. Americans dismissed the Mosquito kingdom as a British ploy to gain control, then criticized Britain's lack of success in governing the region. Manifest destiny included the obligation to "show the way for the historically retrograde," a duty that the British seemed to have neglected.⁴ In addition, Americans insisted that the Western Hemisphere was their domain, not Europe's, and that Nicaraguans would prefer American to British rule.

American Chargé d'affaires to Central America, Ephraim George Squier, popularized the notion that the British were about to seize the Mosquito Coast from natives who were incapable of self-rule. His scenario appealed to Americans who wished to view British rule as exploitative and to perceive American involvement in Nicaragua as both humane and strategically beneficial. Recent historians have noted Squier's exaggerations: while Squier portrayed the Miskito kings as ignorant puppets,

³ Harold Eugene Davis, John J. Finan, and F. Taylor Peck, *Latin American Diplomatic History: An Introduction* (Baton Rouge, 1977), 57–60; Dozier, 39–40.

⁴ Stephanson, xii.

most were actually respected leaders; and British designs on the region were not so calculated or determined as Squier portrayed them.

Belief in manifest destiny's mission, coupled with self-interest, caused many Americans who criticized British imperialism in Nicaragua and elsewhere to support their own nation's expansion. Some Americans questioned the manifest destiny tenet of Providence, but journals such as the *Friend* and the *Christian Examiner*, which routinely criticized British imperialism and sympathized with subject peoples, applauded American expansion here, while the Catholic journal *Brownson's Quarterly Review* also did so, if fitfully.

The 1850s saw Anglo-American tensions over Nicaragua both in treaty debates and on the ground. The 1850 Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was supposed to defuse Anglo-American tensions, but for Americans it only made things worse. According to American interpretations of the treaty, the British would surrender their Mosquito Coast protectorate, and the nations would construct a canal together. But the British believed that the treaty allowed them to hold on to their protectorate, which they did, and potentially allowed them to prevent a canal from ever being built. Americans were furious at their government for entering into such a deal. American industrialist Cornelius Vanderbilt tried to develop a transportation system from the East Coast to California. The line was successful, but conflicts between his company and the authorities at Nicaragua's eastern port of Greytown led to violence and could have led to an Anglo-American war. Both sides, however, were too occupied with other concerns to let the situation escalate, and war was averted.

Nicaragua's Indians were descended from Colombia's Sumu tribes, who migrated north and populated the Mosquito Shore, on Nicaragua's east coast, by the early seventeenth century. Among these hunter-gatherers, numbering perhaps two thousand, were the Miskito Indians.⁵

British logwood cutters first arrived in Central America in the mid-seventeenth century to harvest mahogany.⁶ The Britons gathered the reddish-brown wood on the Mosquito Coast until 1783, at which point they moved their operations to Belize.⁷ By 1830, however, Central America had gained independence from Spain, and Belize's wood supply had been depleted. The Britons eyed the forests of the Aguan River region, which was claimed by both the Central American Republics and the Miskito people. To gain access to the supply, the merchants resurrected the Miskito kingship. The Britons needed an orderly environment in which to trade, and this need drew them further into Mosquito Coast affairs. In 1842, the death of Miskito King Robert Charles Frederick sparked two years of anarchy on the Mosquito Shore. To keep order and protect British residents, the British government appointed a consul-general to the Coast.⁸

As a writer for *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (1844–1875) noted, Great Britain's presence in Central America received little attention from Americans “prior

⁵ Robert A. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism: The Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1600–1914* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), 22–25.

⁶ Leslie Bethell, “Britain and Latin America in historical perspective,” in Victor Bulmer-Thomas, ed., *Britain and Latin America: a changing relationship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3.

⁷ Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 17.

⁸ Robert A. Naylor, “The British Role in Central America Prior to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* (August 1960), 375–77.

to the acquisition of California and our settlements on the Pacific.”⁹ Discovery of California’s gold in 1848 sparked American interest in an isthmian route and consequently in the British status there.¹⁰ The British realized the importance of westward routes and formalized their control. At the time, Nicaragua was a prime location for a canal.¹¹ As the United States government prepared to ratify Bidlack’s Treaty, which had been negotiated with New Granada to secure transit rights in Panama, the British retaliated by sending warships into the port of San Juan del Norte, Nicaragua, which was the most logical eastern terminus for a canal.¹² They renamed it Greytown, replaced the Nicaraguan flag with that of Mosquitia, and, after a struggle with the Nicaraguans, took the Coast and assumed governmental control.¹³ The Department of State sent Elijah Hise and Ephraim George Squier to the region to observe British expansion, in 1848 and 1849 respectively, and both were alarmed at the extensive degree of British control. Both exceeded their instructions by making treaties with the Nicaraguans that gave sole control of transit routes in the country to American-led companies.¹⁴

Neither treaty, however, was ratified.¹⁵ Secretary of State John Clayton wanted to avoid hostilities with Great Britain and suggested to British Minister to the United

⁹ “Great Britain and the United States,” *Brown. Qly. Rev.* [Boston and New York] (January 1856), 110.

¹⁰ Naylor, “British Role in Central America,” 378.

¹¹ Craig L. Dozier, *Nicaragua’s Mosquito Shore: The Years of British and American Presence* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 58.

¹² Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Policy: A History to 1914* (Lexington, Mass., 1988), 135.

¹³ Courtenay De Kalb, “Nicaragua: Studies on the Mosquito Shore,” *Bull. of the Amer. Geog. Soc.* (1894), 243; Norman A. Graebner, ed., *Manifest Destiny* (Indianapolis, 1968), 311; Dozier, 56.

¹⁴ Dozier, 69.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

States Henry Lytton Bulwer that both sides formally renounce designs on the area.¹⁶ In the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, signed on April 19, 1850, they agreed to cooperate on an isthmian canal and not to colonize in the region.¹⁷

Americans believed that the treaty would lessen the British presence in the region, but they were wrong. The British did not consider the treaty to be retroactive, and therefore they maintained their protectorate.¹⁸ In the summer of 1851, Cornelius Vanderbilt began his service of steamship, canal, and carriage service through the country with his Accessory Transit Company. Vanderbilt's company had violent encounters with local officials, though the British and American governments prevented the incidents from escalating.¹⁹

When the Crimean War ended in 1856, Britain's war-weary public was unwilling to support another war to maintain its Mosquito protectorate. In the Dallas-Clarendon Treaty of 1857, the Britons promised to relinquish their political hold over the Coast, but the United States never ratified the treaty. In the Treaty of Managua, however, which Great Britain and Nicaragua signed in 1860, Great Britain relinquished its Mosquito holdings and recognized Nicaraguan sovereignty over the region.²⁰ The treaty did not solve all problems between the United States and Great Britain, but it did allow the American interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty to

¹⁶ Graebner, ed., 312.

¹⁷ Lawrence A. Clayton, "The Nicaraguan Canal in the Nineteenth Century: Prelude to American Empire in the Caribbean," *Journal of Latin American Studies* (1987), 325; Graebner, ed., 311.

¹⁸ De Kalb, 244; Dozier, 80.

¹⁹ Dozier, 79, 82–85.

²⁰ E. Bradford Burns, *Patriarch and Folk: The Emergence of Nicaragua, 1798–1858* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 224.

prevail.²¹

Americans showed interest in Latin America as early as the seventeenth century, when Cotton Mather and other New England Puritans learned Spanish with the hope of spreading Puritanism in the region. American involvement before the 1820s, however, proceeded at a leisurely pace. The eighteenth century saw increasing scholarly interest in the region, and intellectuals throughout the Americas shared membership in societies for the promotion of useful knowledge. Whaling and smuggling, meanwhile, indicated the beginning of economic interests, and the United States' continental expansion brought the regions still closer together.²²

The pace of involvement between the regions accelerated in the 1820s, when the Latin American nations gained independence from Spain. In 1822 the United States became the first non-Latin American country to recognize the independence of Mexico and several South American countries. The Monroe Doctrine appeared the next year.²³ Throughout the 1820s the United States sent representatives to Central America to gather information on the region, to discuss transportation concerns with Latin American representatives, and to secure commercial treaties. Early efforts were unsuccessful; three of the first six United States diplomatic agents died before they arrived at their destination, and those who survived rarely attained their goals. John L. Stephens was the ninth American representative to the region. He, too, was foiled in

²¹ Dozier, 104, 105, 106.

²² Wesley P. Newton, "Origins of United States-Latin American Relations," in *United States-Latin American Relations, 1800-1850*, ed. T. Ray Shurbutt (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, (1991), 4, 5, 6, 7, 9.

²³ Charles L. Stansifer, "United States-Central American Relations, 1824-1850," in *ibid.*, 24.

his mission—he learned upon his arrival that the Central American federation had collapsed, and there were therefore no representatives with whom he could meet. Stephens, therefore, turned his visit into a fact-finding mission.²⁴

The result was Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, & Yucatan*, which was only the second travel account of the region to be published in a hundred and forty years.²⁵ The popularity of Stephens's journals derived from both their novelty and their timing with the Pan-American movement, in which Americans developed an interest in—and sense of kinship with—their Latin American neighbors. In the words of editor Richard Predmore, Stephens “brought to an America now ripe for self-discovery the first fair account of its distant past.”²⁶

Central America's importance to Americans derived not from its people or resources but from its location. Transit across the isthmus could make Asia more accessible to the United States. The region was therefore crucial, but only as a stepping stone. The mind of ethnologist Ephraim George Squier was not on Central America when he began his two-volume study of *Nicaragua*. Rather, he began his first chapter by noting: “The conquest of Asia or the acquisition of its commerce has been, from the earliest periods of history to the present hour, the aim” of men to whom “succeeding ages have accorded the title of heroic.”²⁷

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 made Central America, as a

²⁴ Ibid., 33, 34.

²⁵ Ibid., 29.

²⁶ John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, & Yucatan*, ed. Richard Predmore (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1949), v. 1, xxiii.

²⁷ E. G. Squier, *Nicaragua; its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1853), v. 1, 3.

potential shortcut to the West Coast, more important still. James Marshall took several years to reach Sacramento from his native New Jersey, crossing the country by wagon train and living in the Midwest and Kansas for a few years before taking the Oregon Trail to California.²⁸ When Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848, however, easterners wanted a faster route. All eyes went to Central America. A writer for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* predicted that an isthmian canal would turn "a six or eight months' voyage around Cape Horn" into a trip of "four or six weeks."²⁹ Ephraim Squier noted that news of California's gold had made Latin America "familiar alike to the dwellers on the arid shores of New England and on the banks of the turbid Mississippi."³⁰ And a writer for *Bankers' Magazine* (1846–1943) admitted that Nicaragua held "an incomparably greater interest than it formerly possessed" as a result of the "discovery of [California's] extraordinary mineral riches ... and the consequent emigration to and intercourse with that country."³¹

Central America, therefore, could bring the world together. To a writer for the commercial journal *De Bow's Review* (1846–1880) the region was ideally situated. "Separating by a narrow strip of rock, the two great oceans of the globe," he explained, "it is open at contiguous points, to the commerce of both."³² In 1842, the brother of entrepreneur William Wheelwright predicted that an isthmian passage

²⁸ *DAB*, v. 12, 314.

²⁹ "The Mosquito King and the British Queen," *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* (November 1849), 405.

³⁰ Ephraim George Squier, "San Juan de Nicaragua," *Harper's Mthly. Mag.* (December 1854), 50, also quoted in Katherine Emma Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American artists Explore Latin America, 1839–1879* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 42–43.

³¹ "Foreign Commerce of the United States with the Central Republics of South America," *Bank Mag.* [Cambridge, Mass.] (July 1857), 34.

³² "Central America," *De Bow's Rev.* [New Orleans] (July 1856), 1, 2.

would make Panama “one of the most interesting spots in the world.”³³ To a *Christian Examiner* writer, Central America was “the most favored spot on the surface of the globe” because it was “open to the commerce of the world in every direction.”³⁴ And a writer for the *Friend* believed that a canal would make the region “the great thoroughfare of nations” and would give the region “an importance, both commercial and political, which otherwise she never can attain.”³⁵

And if Central America became the center of the world geographically, the United States would become the center of the world commercially. A writer for the Whig journal *American Review* suggested that American acquisition of California put the United States in a position “of the deepest world-wide historical significance” and represented “the beginning of a great American epoch in the history of the world.”³⁶ “We seem to be on the point of taking the position which China has always claimed, and of becoming the true centre of the world, at least so far as commerce is concerned,” author Hinton Rowan Helper observed in his 1855 memoir, *The Land of Gold*.³⁷

Isthmian transit would facilitate manifest destiny. The course of empire, moving ever westward, could do so more efficiently if it did not have to round Cape Horn. The isthmus of Panama, where the canal was eventually constructed, was the

³³ William Wheelwright’s brother, “Steam Navigation to the Pacific by the Isthmus of Panama and along the Western Coast of South America,” *Amer. J. of Sci. &c.* (January 1842), 361.

³⁴ “Review of Current Literature,” *Chr. Exam.* (January 1860), 144, 145.

³⁵ “Central America,” *Friend* (May 23, 1840), 267.

³⁶ “California,” *Amer. Rev.* (April 1849), 331.

³⁷ Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Land of Gold. Reality Versus Fiction* (Baltimore: H. Taylor, 1855), 287.

narrowest strip of land in Central America, and was more popular, but the Nicaragua trip was the shortest—and was safer.³⁸ Passengers would sail from New York or New Orleans to San Juan del Norte, on the Mosquito Coast, then cross Nicaragua—partly by steamboat, and partly on mules. They would arrive at the town of Realjo, on the Pacific Ocean, and sail from there to San Francisco.³⁹ The trip could take several weeks or months and cost between \$180 and \$300. But many were willing to make the journey, and entrepreneurs did not miss this fact.⁴⁰ And while they profited, the Nicaraguans would be shocked into civilization. A writer for the *American Phrenological Journal* (1838–1911) thought of Cornelius Vanderbilt's steamship on Lake Nicaragua as "the first steamer that ever blew a whistle to frighten the wild birds and astonish the natives."⁴¹

The isthmian route had to be secure. In the spring of 1849, the Reverend George D. Putnam noted that the three ways of getting to California from the East Coast—"by the Isthmus, by Cape Horn, or directly across the continent"—all involved "difficulty and hazard."⁴² C. C. Smith believed that anyone would support a canal "who considers the length of time required for a passage around either of the great capes, or the dangers attending it."⁴³ And California attorney Samuel Williams Inge, at the 1856 Democratic convention, emphasized the importance of secure

³⁸ J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (New York, 1981), 418, 420.

³⁹ Jo Ann Levy, *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* (Hamden, Conn., 1990), 47.

⁴⁰ Clayton, 325.

⁴¹ "Cornelius Vanderbilt: Phrenological Character and Biography," *Am. Phren. J.* [Philadelphia and New York] (August 1855), 28.

⁴² Rev. George D. Putnam, "California," *Chr. Exam.* (July 1849), 131, 137.

⁴³ C. C. Smith, "Squier's Nicaragua," *Chr. Exam.* (March 1852), 269–70.

transits. “The route across the plains, infested with hostile Indians, is no longer open to the adventurous march of the emigrant,” Inge explained. “In Nicaragua civil war rages; in the midst of which there is no protection to life or property.” The Panamanian route was also perilous. “Upon both the isthmus routes,” he summarized, “danger, disease and death stand in frightful array along the pathway of the emigrant.”⁴⁴

Americans who saw the need for a canal also saw the need for foreign intervention in Nicaragua. They considered the setting to be gorgeous, but had no expectations that the native inhabitants would develop or secure isthmian transit routes themselves. Some American painters compared the region with the Garden of Eden.⁴⁵ Mary Durant, who traveled through Nicaragua in 1853—and whose husband Henry would become the first president of the University of California—insisted that the San Juan River was one of the prettiest that she had seen. Members of her party moved through the country gathering “curiosities” including “thick green leaves six feet in length,” which many of them used as umbrellas.⁴⁶ Another passenger referred to Greytown as “one of the prettiest and most charming little places it was ever my happiness to fall into.”⁴⁷

But these observers noted the contrast between the bountiful land and its

⁴⁴ *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention, Held in Cincinnati. June 2–6, 1856* (Cincinnati: Enquirer Company Steam Printing, 1856), 57–58. Making of American Internet database, University of Michigan (hereafter referred to as MOA).

⁴⁵ Manthorne, 10–21.

⁴⁶ Mary Durant, Letter of Dec. 24, 1853, Durant Family Letters. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, quoted in Levy, 48; *DAB*, v. 5, 540.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Dozier, 77.

languorous inhabitants. William V. Wells, author of *Explorations and Adventures in Honduras*, admired Nicaragua's "wondrous beauties of nature" but was struck by having "a debased and decadent race" amid "the choicest gifts of Providence." Civil war, he lamented, had reduced the Nicaraguans to "a condition not excelled in detail of savagery by the most bestial natives in Africa."⁴⁸ Other writers saw the contrast as short-lived. Journalist Edward Alfred Pollard saw in the "magnificent country of tropical America" which was "now covered with mute ruins, and trampled over by half-savages" the potential for "the glory of an empire, controlling the commerce of the world, impregnable in its position, and representing in its internal structure the most harmonious of all the systems of modern civilization."⁴⁹ And a writer for *De Bow's Review* suggested that, "Should Mexico and Central America become united to this Republic—and the day may not be far distant," that "the immense agricultural and mineral resources of those countries would cause a vast tide of Anglo-American emigration to set toward them, and the developments of wealth and comfort that would be made in a few years would astonish the world." Anglo-American emigration, he insisted, was crucial. "Under the present race," he cautioned, "those countries will never be anything."⁵⁰

Many other Americans also found Nicaraguans lazy or offensive. In the opinion of a writer for the *Moravian*—whose article was reprinted in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*—the Miskito Indians' "main characteristic" was "laziness, in a

⁴⁸ Wells, 85, 497.

⁴⁹ Edward Alfred Pollard, *Black Diamonds Gathered in the Darkey Homes of the South* (New York: Putney and Russell, 1859), 108, MOA; DAB, v. 15, 47.

⁵⁰ "Nicaragua and the Interoceanic Canal," *De Bow's Rev.* (September 1852), 255.

very high degree.”⁵¹ A writer for *De Bow's Review* noted that Nicaraguans were “very deficient in ambition and energy, and have a very decided objection to labor,” spending their time gambling, cockfighting, and swinging in hammocks.⁵² In 1853, Mary Crocker crossed through Nicaragua with her gold-seeking husband and found everything “new & strange,” she wrote, “particularly the *naked* natives, this we soon became accustomed to as also many other unpleasant things.”⁵³ Politicians shared their disdain. Senator Thomas Hart Benton considered the town of Chagres to be inhabited by people “with whom it could not be desirable for any one to stay over night.”⁵⁴ And Secretary of State James Buchanan, in a letter to Chargé d'affaires Elijah Hise, described them as “miserable, degraded, and insignificant.”⁵⁵

Native Nicaraguans were also derided for their being of mixed races and often illegitimate birth. To a writer for the *Democratic Review*, Miskitos were “some few hundred illegitimate savages, born of indiscriminate concubinage, and leprous from a commixture of every impure blood.”⁵⁶ A writer for the *Church Review* (1848–1891) characterized the inhabitants as being “as graceless a set of negroes, natives and sambos, as could well be found.”⁵⁷ In an 1850 letter to Ephraim George Squier, historian Francis Parkman admitted that he wanted to see Nicaragua, but he referred

⁵¹ “Moravian Mission among the Mosquitoes,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (May 1860), 149.

⁵² “Nicaragua and the Fillibusters,” *De Bow's Rev.* (June 1856), 675a. MOA.

⁵³ Mary Crocker, Letter of March 25, 1853, California State Library, Sacramento, quoted in Levy, 50.

⁵⁴ “Congressional Summary: Railroad Across the Isthmus of Panama,” *Amer. Rev.* (February 1849), 212.

⁵⁵ Buchanan to Hise, June 3, 1848, State Department, microcopy 77, roll 27, 51–61, quoted in Naylor, 173.

⁵⁶ “British Aggression in Central America,” *U.S. Mag. and Dem. Rev.* (January 1851), 3.

⁵⁷ “Book Notices,” *Ch. Rev.* [New Haven, Conn.] (October 1855), 464.

to its inhabitants as “niggers, Indians and other outcasts of humanity.”⁵⁸

White, middle-class, Protestant Americans blamed the Nicaraguans for the dearth of progress in their country and concluded that Miskitos were incapable of self-rule. A writer for *Putnum's Monthly Magazine* (1853–1870) stated that, although Nicaragua was nominally a republic, “the languor and ignorance of its inhabitants, who are of mixed races, keep it in a semi-barbarous condition.”⁵⁹ A writer for *Bankers' Magazine* believed that Central America “would long ere this have ranked amongst the most beautiful and prosperous portions of the earth” had the states been “in the hands of Anglo-Saxon settlers.”⁶⁰ A writer for *De Bow's Review*—inspired by Squier's *Nicaragua*—suggested that if the Central American nation “had been the territory of any other than the Spanish race, there would have been a canal across the isthmus half a century ago.”⁶¹ And a writer for the *Democratic Review*, the publication that coined the phrase “manifest destiny,” characterized the Miskito Indians as “a handful of harmless, ignorant, naked, ugly, dirty, lazy, drunken, vermin-bitten, itch-smitten, contemptible savages, incapable ... of possessing national entity.”⁶²

Even writers for publications that often criticized British imperialism agreed that Nicaraguans were unfit for self-rule. A writer for the Unitarian *Christian Examiner* characterized the Mosquito Shore as “miserable” and the Miskito Indians as

⁵⁸ Francis Parkman, *Letters of Francis Parkman*, ed. Wilbur R. Jacobs (Norman, Okla., 1960), vol. 1, 68.

⁵⁹ “Filibustering,” *Putnam's Mthly. Mag.* [New York] (April 1857), 427.

⁶⁰ “The Anglo-Saxon Race,” *Bank. Mag.* (August 1850), 108.

⁶¹ “Nicaragua and the Interoceanic Canal,” 237.

⁶² “The Mosquito King and the British Queen,” 410

being “as wretched as their country, a mixed medley of ‘negroes, Indians, pirates, and Jamaica traders,’” while a writer for the Quaker journal the *Friend* described the Indians as “an ignorant indolent race.”⁶³ In listing the obstacles to building an isthmian canal, the *Friend* cited “the disturbed state of Central America at the present moment, and the civil commotions to which it is subject at all times,” while the *Christian Examiner* insisted that, although Central America’s inhabitants had “excellent qualities if directed by superior intellect,” they were “unable to govern themselves.”⁶⁴

Americans believed that an isthmian transit route would require Anglo-Saxon control, to ensure that it was built and secured. William Wells considered a thirteen-mile-long macadamized road as one of many examples where “the genius of our countrymen are overcoming the terrors of tropical climates, and opening to the world the vast undeveloped fields of enterprise presented through the Central American Isthmus.”⁶⁵ Ephraim Squier agreed that Americans could control the chaotic landscape. “Order seems to have gone into exile with Religion, and they await the arm of a stronger race to call them back; and the Anglo-Saxon is the only race that can do it,” he insisted.⁶⁶

And that religion had to be *Protestant* Christianity. Many Americans criticized Catholicism as having done little good in the region. To these writers, this was more

⁶³ “Notices of Recent Publications,” *Chr. Exam.* (September 1855), 312–13; “Central America,” *Friend* (May 30, 1840), 273.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 267; “Review of Current Literature,” *Chr. Exam.* (January 1860), 145.

⁶⁵ Wells, 29.

⁶⁶ Ephraim George Squier, “Reminiscences of Central America,” *De Bow’s Rev.* (October 1860), 429.

proof of the need for Americans to move in. Although C. C. Smith had “no sympathy with the Romish church,” he was sorry that the predominant religion in the region had had little effect on Nicaraguans, and he hoped that American involvement would “[open] the way for the introduction of a simpler and purer faith.”⁶⁷ A writer for the Episcopal *Church Review* would not credit Catholicism with bringing even small benefits to the region. “Romanism,” he insisted, “has proved itself a curse to the people.” The writer considered its effect on “public morals” to have “not been one whit better than heathenism” and hoped that “our own true branch of the Church will have wisdom and zeal enough to do her duty to Central America.”⁶⁸ Catholics had “undisturbed occupation” of Central America for three hundred years, noted a writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, yet the clergy became “slaves of vice” and the people were still irreligious.⁶⁹ Referring to Oregon and California, the Reverend Dr. Sherman Hall, a secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, asked, “Does it not seem as if Providence had been keeping these regions from the attention of the great nations until a thoroughly *Protestant* people could occupy them?”⁷⁰

Americans who typically supported the British empire found themselves with a new challenge where Nicaragua was concerned: to explain why rule must be American and not British. Although these Americans often defended British rule on racial and religious grounds, British rule on Nicaragua’s Mosquito Coast would be

⁶⁷ Smith, “Squier’s Nicaragua,” 263.

⁶⁸ “Book Notices,” *Ch. Rev.* (April 1856), 125.

⁶⁹ “Religion in Central America,” *Bap. Miss. Mag.* (February 1851), 59.

⁷⁰ Quoted in “California,” *Chr. Watch. & Chr. Reflec.* (Jan. 4, 1849), 4; *DAB*, v. 8, 144.

anathema to them. To justify the need for American control, they insisted that the Britons had already had their chance in the region, and they had failed to improve the people. They also asserted that the Americas were the United States' domain, not Europe's, and that the Nicaraguans themselves preferred American to British rule. American Chargé d'affaires Ephraim George Squier fanned the flames of these arguments with his writings, in which he popularized negative stereotypes of Nicaraguans and exaggerated the extent of British designs on the Mosquito Coast.

To criticize British encroachment, many Americans dismissed British claims to the Coast as fiction. To a writer for the *Democratic Review*, Mosquitia was a "realm of fancy."⁷¹ Ephraim Squier insisted that the Miskito Indians "never themselves pretended to any territorial rights ... until induced to do so by British agents," and anonymously stated that the Britons used "the paltriest pretexts" in taking San Juan de Nicaragua.⁷² A writer for the *International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science* (1850–1852)—a journal that frequently praised Squier's work—described British Consul Frederick Chatfield as "arbitrarily lay[ing] down the boundary line between Honduras, Nicaragua and Musquitia—an assumed kingdom," he continued, "under cover of which the British authorities have taken possession of the port of San Juan."⁷³

Behind the supposed Miskito kingdom, they continued, was British control. A *Democratic Review* writer stated that Great Britain sought "to control the projected

⁷¹ "The Mosquito King and the British Queen," 414.

⁷² Quoted in "Nicaragua," *De Bow's Rev.* (September 1852), 257; [E. G. Squier], "The Mosquito Question," *Amer. Rev.* (February 1850), 188.

⁷³ "Historical Review of the Month," *Int'l Mag. of Lit., Art, and Sci.* [New York] (March 1, 1851), 567.

canal at the Atlantic mouth in virtue of her Mosquito juggle: and at the other mouth, through the claim of Costa Rica.”⁷⁴ In 1840, a writer for the *Friend* explained that the Miskito Indians were “in some sort, under the control of the English, to whom they are very much attached.”⁷⁵ In the opinion of a *Christian Examiner* writer, “A more ridiculous sham than their sovereign has not been contrived by politicians in recent times.” Rather than governing, the Miskito king was “playing the puppet ... to an English official at Bluefields.”⁷⁶

Once the sham of the Mosquito kingship had been established, and British control pointed out, Americans could evaluate the Britons’ performance as rulers in the region. Citing a lack of focus on religion, too much vice, and a lack of attention to domestic concerns, they gave the imperial power low marks. A writer for the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* noted that Great Britain had long held the Mosquito Coast as a protectorate but had “done nothing to introduce the gospel into this land.” American Moravians, meanwhile, were training Indian boys as ministers and translating religious works “into the Mosquito tongue.”⁷⁷ In another article, a writer for the journal noted that although Britons were “professed protestants” who had frequented Honduras for “about a century and a half,” they had neglected to establish any houses of worship, and British missionaries had made little progress in Belize.⁷⁸ A writer for the *Democratic Review* cynically suggested that the British had “two methods of making people love them,” which were “love powder” and the “elixir of love”—

⁷⁴ “British Aggression in Central America,” 11.

⁷⁵ “Central America,” *Friend* (May 30, 1840), 274.

⁷⁶ “Notices of Recent Publications,” *Chr. Exam.* (September 1855), 312–13.

⁷⁷ “Moravian Mission among the Mosquitoes,” 151, 148

⁷⁸ Quoted in “Religion in Central America,” 59, 60.

opium and rum respectively, the latter having been used to win the Miskitos' affection.⁷⁹ A writer for the *Moravian*, in an article that was reprinted in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, concurred, stating that the Miskito Indians were "very good-natured, ... except when under the influence of strong drink," and that European traders encouraged intemperate behavior.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, some observers criticized the Britons for ignoring domestic concerns. Great Britain's high poverty rate made the nation's overseas excursions appear extravagant. Squier, in an anonymous *American Review* article, stated that Americans "have observed with what greediness and utter disregard of the rights of weaker nations [Great Britain] grasps at every commanding position on both continents, cementing the bulwarks of her greatness with the blood of her children at home."⁸¹

Americans criticized British missteps, but to support American predominance they also appealed to the Monroe Doctrine and Pan-Americanism. Americans' notions of Latin America as their domain grew in the late 1840s and 1850s, when notions of Pan-Americanism—that is, feelings of cooperation and understanding among North, Central, and South Americans—grew into "more aggressive, proprietary attitudes." Americans began to refer to "our southern continent" and "our own tropical regions." Painters began to define America's landscape boundaries in hemispheric, rather than national, terms, and ethnologists looked for unity of the Americas in their work. In 1848, John Russell Bartlett, who formed the American Ethnological Society, noted

⁷⁹ "The Mosquito King and the British Queen," 409.

⁸⁰ "Moravian Mission among the Mosquitoes," 149.

⁸¹ [Squier], "The Mosquito Question," 190.

that the Mississippi Valley had once been inhabited by a people whose culture “closely resembled ... the races of Central America; if they were not indeed their progenitors or an offshoot from them.”⁸² A year later, Ephraim George Squier would seek a diplomatic appointment to Central America so that he could explore that theory.

In addition to Americans feeling the stirrings of hemispheric kinship, they asserted that Nicaraguans desired American control. In his debates with Bulwer, Secretary of State John Clayton assured the Briton that all five of the Central American states would “annex themselves to us tomorrow, if they could” and that “*Some of them have offered and asked to be annexed to the United States already.*”⁸³ Chargé d'affaires Squier complained that the Nicaraguans “were subject without appeal to [the British vice consul's] will” and insisted that “every heart and every door in all Nicaragua” opened to the “Americanos del Norte.”⁸⁴ “These we found were magic words,” Squier observed. “They never failed us. We felt proud to know that no such charm was attached to ‘Ingleses,’ ‘Alemanes,’ or ‘Franceses.’”⁸⁵ He also insisted that the “swarthy, earnest” Indians that he encountered in Nicaragua “talk of Washington as the political regenerator, not of his own country alone, but of the continent and the world.”⁸⁶ Elsewhere, the first president was practically deified.

⁸² John Russell Bartlett, “The Progress of Ethnology and Geography,” *Trans. of the Amer. Ethnological Soc.* (New York, 1848), 7; *DAB*, v. 2, 7.

⁸³ Clayton quoted in S. F. Bemis, ed., *American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy* (New York, 1928), vol. 6, 57, quoted in Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), 275. Italics in original.

⁸⁴ Squier, *Nicaragua*, vol. 1, 79, 151–52.

⁸⁵ “Adventures and Observations in Nicaragua,” *Int'l. Mag. of Lit., Art, and Sci.* (July 1, 1851), 437.

⁸⁶ Squier, *Nicaragua*, vol. 2, 204.

William Wells noted that a Catholic priest in Rivas had acquired a bust of George Washington and kept it in the church amid the “bearded images of saints and martyrs.”⁸⁷

Ultimately, Americans claimed that the highest authority ordained their control of Central America. Signs of God’s will seemed to be everywhere: the European upheavals of 1848 suggested that the New World needed to replace the Old, American acquisition of land after the Mexican War reaffirmed that the course of empire was westward, and American discovery of gold in California—which Mexicans had not found in three centuries of occupation—confirmed for many Americans that God was on their side. Construction of an isthmian canal would facilitate the mission, by accelerating emigration to the West Coast and bringing American commerce closer to the rest of the world. In the *Commercial Review*, editor J.D.B. De Bow observed that, although the “Spaniards would appear to have been on the California gold track three centuries ago, ... destiny reserved the prize for us.”⁸⁸ Whigs were less expansionist than their Democratic counterparts, but they accepted the notion of American mission. A writer for the *American Review* deemed the Mexican War “unjust,” but he believed that “the providence of God conducted our nation unconsciously through the events of the last three years.” The United States, he theorized, was becoming “the new historical centre of the earth” while “the whole old-settled order of things in Europe is breaking up and passing forever away.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Wells, 48.

⁸⁸ J.D.B. De Bow, “Communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans,” *Comm. Rev.* (July 1849), 2 n.

⁸⁹ “California,” *Amer. Rev.* (April 1849), 334, 335, 334.

Americans saw Providence also in Central America, and they characterized the situation as one in which they had a duty which they must not shirk. Citing American treaties with parts of the region, Squier anonymously suggested in the *American Review* that it was America's "duty" to challenge "outrages upon the feeble Republics of Central America."⁹⁰ A writer for the *Democratic Review* was emphatic that the United States not "Shrink from or evade" their pledge "to maintain to Nicaragua the uninterrupted dominion of the territory through which the canal passes."⁹¹ And to a writer for the *Christian Examiner*—which usually had a tepid attitude toward British expansion—Central America had been "thrown by Providence into the main stream of expanding civilization."⁹²

Most Americans ardently opposed Great Britain in the matter, and much of their antagonism can be traced to the politically charged writings of Ephraim George Squier, who served as American chargé d'affaires to Nicaragua in 1849 and 1850. Squier used his experience in the region, his sterling reputation, and his imagination to goad Americans into opposing the British presence there. Through his exaggerated accounts of the situation, he created an enduring portrayal of natives who were incapable of governing themselves and of Britons who were determined to control the Mosquito Coast.

Squier would appear to have been an ideal chronicler of the Central American

⁹⁰ [Squier], "The Mosquito Question," 190.

⁹¹ "British Aggression in Central America," 14.

⁹² "Review of Current Literature," *Chr. Exam.* (January 1860), 145.

situation. At the time of his appointment, he was already a respected archaeologist whose co-authored study of prehistoric mounds in Ohio, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, had become the Smithsonian Institution's first publication.⁹³ In 1851, on the eve of the publication of his book *Nicaragua: its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal*, a writer for the *International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science* referred to Squier's earlier work as "a pledge of the value of his new performances" and added that Squier's diplomatic post enabled him to obtain "full and accurate information."⁹⁴ The merits of Squier's work were further assured by the fact that his interest in the region was primarily intellectual, rather than political. He had requested the diplomatic appointment to finance archaeological research in Central America, to explore the theory of a connection between men who had built pyramids in that region and the Ohio Mound Builders.⁹⁵ But despite historian Francis Parkman's warning to Squier not to let "Politics swallow up science," the two became inextricable.⁹⁶

Squier was to survey the situation in Central America, promote American interests, and make recommendations to the United States government as to how to counter the British presence. Squier was alarmed at the degree of British control, and he exceeded his authority by securing a treaty with the Nicaraguan government for exclusive rights to build a canal there.⁹⁷

⁹³ Michael G. Olien, "E. G. Squier and the Miskito: Anthropological Scholarship and Political Propaganda," *Ethnohistory* (1985), 133.

⁹⁴ "Authors and Books," *Int'l Mag. of Lit., Art, and Sci.* (April 1, 1851), 38; Olien, 112.

⁹⁵ Olien, "E. G. Squier," 111-12.

⁹⁶ Parkman, vol. 1, 63.

⁹⁷ Dozier, 69; Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1826-1867* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press,

Squier's advocacy did not stop when he returned from Nicaragua. Instead, he published two works on the region under his own name and many others under pseudonyms or anonymously. This enabled him to reach a broad audience while giving the illusion that his opinions were held by many educated observers, rather than being the convictions of one tireless advocate. In addition to 1852's *Nicaragua* and the 1855 book *Notes on Central America; Particularly the States of Honduras and San Salvador*, for which he was acknowledged as the author, Squier wrote 1855's *Waikna; or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* under the pseudonym of Samuel A. Bard and penned anonymous articles for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and for journals for both major political parties—the *American Whig Review* and the *Democratic Review*. Referring to himself as “Mr. Squier” or “that gentleman,” Squier even anonymously defended his own actions in the *American Whig Review*—to respond to complaints that he had overstepped his authority in Nicaragua—and he wrote a laudatory review of his pseudonymous *Waikna* for *Harper's*.⁹⁸

In his writings, Squier criticized the British government's presence on the Mosquito Coast by rejecting the notion that the Miskito Indians could constitute a sovereign people—the status upon which British control of the region relied—and then insisting that the British recognized the natives only to gain control of the region themselves. To reject the possibility of Miskito sovereignty, he characterized the native inhabitants as drunken, depraved, few in number and lacking in influence, and

1933), 201.

⁹⁸ Olien, “E. G. Squier,” 117, [E. G. Squier], “The Great Ship Canal Question: England and Costa Rica versus the United States and Nicaragua,” *Am. Whig. Rev.* (November 1850), 442, 441.

dismissed them as "a mongrel breed, crossed between negroes and Indians, in every degree of mixture."⁹⁹ To many of his readers, worthiness of sovereignty would appear to have been based not on long-term residence but on population, decorum, intelligence, and race.

Squier insisted that the British sought to control the region and transit routes across it. On October 25, 1849, he told Secretary of State John Clayton that Great Britain's goal was "to possess herself all of Central America."¹⁰⁰ In the *American Review* four months later, he insisted that Great Britain regarded American growth "half of jealousy and half of fear."¹⁰¹ And in 1856, he explained to his parents that he had written *Waikna* to turn support of "Queen Victoria's august ally of Mosquito into contempt."¹⁰² In 1852's *Nicaragua*, he lambasted the British while playing the diplomat. Although he explained that he would avoid writing about Britain's presence on the Mosquito Coast due to the topic's "personal and controversial" nature, he referred to British "pretensions" on the coast and to "the aggressions which she [Great Britain] has committed upon a weak and unoffending state, under pretext of supporting them."¹⁰³ In addition, Squier's map followed Great Britain's ever-encroaching presence in the region, with lines marked "British Pretensions 1846," "British Pretension 1848," and "British Pretension 1850." The map also included both

⁹⁹ Squier, *Nicaragua*, vol. 1, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Naylor, "British Role in Central America," 362, n. 3.

¹⁰¹ [Squier], "The Mosquito Question," 190.

¹⁰² Quoted in Philip A. Dennis and Michael D. Olien, "Kingship among the Miskito," *American Ethnologist* (November 1984), 725.

¹⁰³ Squier, *Nicaragua*, xxi.

the "Pretended" and "True" boundaries between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.¹⁰⁴

Squier rejected any suggestion of Miskito sovereignty, but he saw significance in their apparent preference for Americans over Britons. In 1852's *Nicaragua*, Squier was eager to "awaken" his readers' sympathy for "their simple, but unfortunate friends and allies in Central America." These friends knew whom to support. "Everywhere" he went, Squier wrote, he saw "cheerful and enthusiastic assemblages" of people and witnessed "many extraordinary demonstrations of respect and affection for my country."¹⁰⁵ Squier also suggested that the British were trying to turn Nicaraguans against Americans. Nicaraguans wanted to know "whether our people really regarded them as 'esclavos y brutes sin verguenza,' slaves and brutes without shame, as the abominable English (los malditos Ingleses) had represented them," he noted in *Nicaragua*.¹⁰⁶

It would be difficult to overstate Squier's impact on attitudes toward the Nicaraguan situation. Anthropologist Michael Olien has traced Squier's influence—including his factual errors—through much of the historiography on the subject, to as recently as the 1970s.¹⁰⁷ Squier wrote books and articles, either signed or anonymous, and his books formed the basis of other articles. In "Squier's Nicaragua," which appeared in the March 1852 *Christian Examiner*, C. C. Smith conveyed Squier's assertion that the Mosquito Coast was "nominally subject to the Mosquito king, but in

¹⁰⁴ Squier, *Nicaragua*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Squier, *Nicaragua*, xvii.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in "Adventures and Observations in Nicaragua," *Int'l Mag. of Lit., Art, and Sci.* (July 1, 1851), 437.

¹⁰⁷ Olien, "E. G. Squier," 125–28.

reality [was] governed by British influence.”¹⁰⁸ And the *Christian Examiner*’s review of *Waikna*, which Squier wrote under a pseudonym, reported that “little is to be hoped from the Lagoon kingdom besides the gradual extinction of all the Mosquitos.”¹⁰⁹

Some Britons at the time complained of Squier’s characterization of their nation’s presence in Central America. “He paints us in the blackest hues, and prophesies the fall of England with undisguised delight,” complained a writer for the *London Literary Gazette*, whose rebuttal appeared in the *International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science*. Squier’s *Nicaragua* was “defaced by not a few sneers at, and misstatements about, the English,” the Briton continued. “That they should come from a man who is professionally a diplomatist, is evidence of his indiscretion and unfitness for his political calling.”¹¹⁰

Historian Robert Naylor insists that Squier distorted the situation when he suggested that the British were determined to control an isthmian canal. Although a person in 1850 reflecting on the situation might believe that a British conspiracy had been afoot, the Britons’ involvement with the Indians predated the intense search for a canal by several years. It was the search for mahogany, not control of isthmian transit, that moved them to recognize the Miskitos. British merchants had long harvested the wood in Central America, and in 1830, resurrecting the Miskito kingship was the best way to gain access to fresh supplies.¹¹¹

Furthermore, although the British sent warships to defend their interests in

¹⁰⁸ Smith, “Squier’s Nicaragua,” 256.

¹⁰⁹ “Notices of Recent Publications,” *Chr. Exam.* (September 1855), 313.

¹¹⁰ “Mr. Squier on Nicaragua,” *Int’l Mag. of Lit., Art, and Sci.* (April 1, 1852), 476.

¹¹¹ Bethell, 3; Naylor, “British Role in Central America,” 375–76.

Central America, Lord Palmerston repeatedly rejected opportunities to expand territorially in the region. Great Britain's government was reluctant to acquire the Bay Islands and recognize the Mosquito Shore, despite the advocacy of British merchants. Visits from a British man-of-war to the region occurred only to defend the Britons' "legitimate interests."¹¹² In 1848, Palmerston did not follow up on recommendations that Guatemala and Costa Rica become British protectorates, even though the republics were commercially important and willing to accept such status. And in 1849, the British Foreign Office censured Consul Frederick Chatfield for taking Tigre Island.¹¹³

Historians and anthropologists have also revised Squier's portrayal of Miskito kings as dissolute British pawns. Miskito King Robert Charles Frederic inspired the image of the Central American monarchs as "intoxicated puppets who gave away great stretches of land," but he was not typical among rulers of the Coast. Although Squier dismissed the Miskito king as a "farcical character" and described one as "a little Sambo boy, with a precocious taste for liquor,"¹¹⁴ these monarchs were respected authority figures whose line of succession operated independent of British meddling. The Miskitos elected their kings—sometimes over British objections—and the leaders had the authority to "marshall a labor force" and served as judges, moving throughout the region hearing court cases and handing down sentences including sentences of death.¹¹⁵ But Americans heard little of the respect or responsibilities of

¹¹² Ibid., 369.

¹¹³ Naylor, "British Role in Central America," 370, 370 n.22.

¹¹⁴ "Nicaragua," *De Bow's Rev.* (September 1852), 258; [Squier], "The Mosquito Question," 193.

¹¹⁵ Michael D. Olien, "The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession," *J. of Anthropological*

the position. "The mention of the 'King of the Mosquitos,' in a mixed assemblage, rarely fails to elicit a smile or a joke," Squier anonymously stated in the *American Review* in 1850.¹¹⁶ The previous year, a pamphlet had derided Miskito King George Augustus Frederic as "a little child who scarcely knows his right hand from his left," although King George spoke English fluently and his library included the writings of William Shakespeare, Lord Byron, and Sir Walter Scott.¹¹⁷

Some of Squier's contemporaries were not convinced of the need for American expansion. They questioned the manifest destiny notion of a divine mission and debated the merits of a system of international commerce. In 1841, the *Southern Literary Messenger* acknowledged skepticism of the concept of Providence by quoting British Member of Parliament Benjamin Disraeli, who derided those who attributed their victories to the will of God. Such people, he insisted, selected episodes to support their own aspirations—and had the gall to claim that such was God's will—while they ignored equally plausible counterexamples. "Every party discovers in the events which were at first adverse to their own cause, but finally terminate in their favor, that *Providence* had used a peculiar and particular influence," he stated.¹¹⁸

In 1845, in the pages of the social reform journal the *Harbinger*, editor George Ripley believed that increasing wealth in Great Britain and the United States was a

Research (Summer 1983), 200; Dennis and Olien, 727–30.

¹¹⁶ [Squier], "The Mosquito Question," 190.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Olien, "Miskito Kings," 227.

¹¹⁸ "Interpreters of Providence," *South. Lit. Mess.* (March 1841), 186.

result of misplaced priorities that would ultimately destroy the nations. Ripley dismissed as “unwise boasting” talk about “the progress of society, the dignity of human nature, and the future glories of our race.” People who spoke in such terms, he insisted, were “blind to the actual condition of the epoch which we are now passing through,” in which humanity was made “subordinate to money”—the result being “the degradation of so many of the working classes.” Ultimately, such mistaken priorities would “prove fatal to the existence of the British empire, and indeed of all civilized communities.”¹¹⁹

Other Americans who routinely criticized British imperialism as exploitative, however, applauded American forays into Nicaragua and points west. The fact that these writers supported American expansion while they criticized British imperialism suggests that they were motivated by national self-interest, although they asserted that their expansion would help other peoples by spreading peace and morality. Writers for the *Friend* often criticized British expansion, but they repeatedly expounded on American expansion as a blessing for the world. Construction of a canal would cause “a revolution ... in the commercial world, attended with results in the highest degree beneficial to the inhabitants of both hemispheres,” a writer for the publication penned in 1840.¹²⁰ A canal would “enlarge the boundaries of civilization, and ... diffuse the blessings of universal peace,” another *Friend* explained in 1844.¹²¹ And it would “probably completely change the moral and social condition of many of the nations of

¹¹⁹ “Tendencies of Modern Civilization,” *Harbinger* (June 28, 1845), 33.

¹²⁰ “Central America,” *Friend* (May 23, 1840), 267.

¹²¹ “Ship Canal across the Isthmus of Panama,” *Friend* (Aug. 24, 1844), 381.

the East, as well as exercise a powerful influence on our own country and the States of Central America," another Quaker writer speculated, in 1854.¹²²

Even writers for the Catholic journal *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, a stalwart opponent of British imperialism, displayed at least grudging support for its American version, manifest destiny. *Brownson's* staff believed that international capitalism did more harm than good, and they longed for a return to agriculturally based economies. Although a writer for the journal applauded the British for spreading "the great principles of civil freedom and constitutional government," he believed that "the modern industrial and commercial system" did more harm than good. It "impoverishes more than it enriches nations, while it favors their moral degradation," he explained. Consequently, he wished that the system would be destroyed.¹²³

But in writing about the Nicaragua situation, he accepted America's involvement in global commerce and insisted that the United States must play the game as best it could. "We never approved the proclamation by our government of what is called the Monroe doctrine," he explained, "but we expect, and the country expects, the government to act on that doctrine whenever the occasion occurs." He dreaded a scenario in which Americans would cross the isthmus "under the guns of our great commercial rival" and assured his readers that "Our government will recede from no ground that it has taken." "As long as the [international commercial] system remains," he continued, "each nation must in self-defence adopt it, defend it, and draw from it all the advantages it can. Therefore, though disliking the system, we still

¹²² "Isthmus of Darien," *Friend* (Aug. 26, 1854), 394.

¹²³ "Great Britain and the United States," *Brown. Qtrly. Rev.* (January 1856), 117-18.

urge our government to guard it with vigilance.”¹²⁴

The American solution to the Nicaraguan situation was the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, which Secretary of State John Clayton and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer signed in Washington, D. C., on April 19, 1850. Americans would come to regret the agreement. The heart of the debate focused on the treaty’s first article. In it, Clayton and Bulwer agreed that neither Great Britain nor the United States would “ever obtain or maintain for itself any exclusive control over the said Ship-Canal” and that neither would ever “occupy, fortify, or colonize, or assume or exercise any dominion over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, or any part of Central America.”¹²⁵

Improved transportation between the Atlantic and Pacific would benefit the United States more than any other nation; for this reason, Americans could advocate that everybody have access to an isthmian canal, and they would still fare best. In 1850, a writer for the *Friend* predicted that a canal would exist within three years, “under a guaranty of its perpetual freedom and neutrality by several of the chief powers of Christendom.”¹²⁶ “We want no exclusive advantages,” explained a writer for *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* in 1856. “The natural advantages of our position are sufficient for us.”¹²⁷ Vice President George M. Dallas did not expect the United States “to monopolize the uses of the canal; on the contrary,” he continued, “it would

¹²⁴ Ibid., 106, 110–11, 118.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Perkins, 204.

¹²⁶ “The Nicaragua Question,” *Friend* (Jan. 26, 1850), 152.

¹²⁷ “Great Britain and the United States,” 112.

be thrown open on terms ... of the utmost liberality.” Yet Dallas also admitted that a canal “thrown open” would benefit Americans most. There would be “scarcely a region in the limitless South Seas, with which a trade would be lucrative, that could not be reached by [Americans] in half the time that would be consumed by English, French, Spanish, Dutch, or Swedish navigators,” he admitted.¹²⁸

But the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty threatened America’s potential to become the world’s commercial center by preserving Britain’s protectorate in the region while threatening plans for a canal. The treaty’s signatories opposed colonizing in the region and specifically cited the Mosquito Coast in this clause. But after the document was signed, the British maintained that the treaty only forbade future colonizing. Also, the treaty legitimized the Mosquito Coast as a political entity. Because the treaty “*expressly recognized the Mosquito Kingdom,*” a British representative explained to the Nicaraguan government, it “*sets aside the rights which you pretend Nicaragua has on that coast.*”¹²⁹ And for Americans, there was more bad news. In the treaty, each side promised not to construct a canal in the region without the other’s approval. But because such transit would be to the United States’ advantage, the treaty tied America’s hands, by enabling the British to prevent a canal from ever being built.

Americans were annoyed at British cunning in the matter and at the degree to which Clayton had been duped. Democratic Congressman Samuel Sullivan Cox deemed the treaty “the diplomatic blunder of the century” and “a huge gorgon in our

¹²⁸ George M. Dallas, “Atlantic and Pacific Oceans,” *Bank. Mag.* (October 1847), 229.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Squier, *Nicaragua*, v. 1, 277; “Nicaragua,” *De Bow’s Rev.* (September 1852), 245.

path.”¹³⁰ Great Britain had assumed “the control and protectorship of the great projected ‘highway of nations,’” noted an outraged writer for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, and would only alter the treaty to “suit her own haughty pretensions.”¹³¹ To a writer for *De Bow’s Review*, the treaty was “ratified, under the influence of as complete a delusion as John Bull ever wrought upon any personage or treaty ratifying body.”¹³² A writer for *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* concurred. “No administration,” he insisted, “will dare again suffer itself to be bamboozled as Mr. Clayton was by Sir Henry Bulwer.”¹³³

Some suggested that American policymakers should have known better than to enter into an agreement regarding an isthmian canal with Great Britain, as a canal would be of much greater benefit to Americans than to Britons. “Great Britain would give a hundred times more to prevent its being opened than it would cost to open it,” the writer for *Brownson’s* insisted. “Open such a canal,” he added, and nothing but a Suez canal “could prevent this country from commanding the commerce of the world.”¹³⁴ A *Church Review* writer agreed. If the treaty were declared null and void, he noted, “colonies and emigration from the United States would soon bring those important regions within our own control as of right they ought to be.”¹³⁵

The conflict cast a pall on the Anglo-American relationship. “That unfortunate Clayton & Bulwer Treaty must be put out of the way,” President James Buchanan

¹³⁰ Samuel Sullivan Cox, *Eight Years in Congress, from 1857 to 1865* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1865), 114 (MOA); *DAB*, v. 4, 482.

¹³¹ “British Aggression in Central America,” 3.

¹³² “Nicaragua,” *De Bow’s Rev.* (September 1852), 245.

¹³³ “Great Britain and the United States,” 111.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ “Book Notices,” *Ch. Rev.* (April 1856), 124.

informed Lord Clarendon in September 1857. "It will be a bone of contention & a root of bitterness between the two Governments as long as it exists."¹³⁶

Two episodes in Greytown revealed the intensity of Anglo-American tensions at the time, though their resolutions showed that neither side was willing to risk war in the matter. Formerly known as San Juan del Norte, Greytown was the likely eastern terminus of a canal and was claimed by the British, though it had a large American population. Although the United States had had an opportunity to secure exclusive rights to an isthmian canal, the administration of President Zachary Taylor had passed on the offer, so as not to offend Great Britain. In 1849, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt sent Colonel David L. White to Central America to determine the viability of a transoceanic railroad or canal and to secure a contract with the Nicaraguan government.¹³⁷ White and Chargé d'affaires Ephraim Squier, as agents of the American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company, secured a contract with the Nicaraguan government, which was eager for foreign investment. Taylor, however, never sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification, so as to avoid souring Anglo-American relations.¹³⁸

Vanderbilt's steamship line thrived in the region. But two skirmishes between Greytown officials and Vanderbilt's company threatened to escalate to war, and they remained local incidents only because both the British and American governments

¹³⁶ *The Works of James Buchanan*, ed. John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia and London, 1910), vol. 10, 122-23.

¹³⁷ Wheaton J. Lane, *Commodore Vanderbilt: An Epic of the Steam Age* (New York, 1942), 87.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 88, 89.

were determined to avoid prolonged conflict. In 1851, Greytown officials boarded Vanderbilt's ship *Prometheus* and demanded port dues. Vanderbilt, who was on board at the time, objected to the request, as his grant from the Nicaraguan government stipulated the absence of such dues. When the officials replied that Greytown was not under Nicaraguan jurisdiction but under rule of the Mosquito king, Vanderbilt replied, "My government recognizes no Mosquito King or kingdom, and I shall not pay you." The British responded by firing shots from the brig *Express* and blockading the mouth of the harbor, which prevented the *Prometheus* from leaving port. Vanderbilt complied and paid the required \$123.¹³⁹ The incident could have sparked war; a *New York Herald* writer believed that if the British did not provide "apology and reparation," then Americans should respond with "retaliation and reprisals." The situation, however, was defused when the British government disavowed the act, Lord Granville apologized, and the British promised that there would be no more levying of port dues.¹⁴⁰

A more serious episode lay ahead. In May 1854, T. T. Smith, captain of one of the riverboats for Vanderbilt's Accessory Transit Company, killed a native Nicaraguan. Natives came looking for Smith, who was being protected by the American minister to Central America, Solon Borland. In a fight between the sides, Borland was hit by a bottle. In retaliation, the American government ordered Navy Captain George A. Hollins to take the *Cyane* to the port and demand an apology and

¹³⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 100.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Lane, 101; Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 189.

\$24,000 in damages.¹⁴¹ Greytown officials refused. “Backed by frowning guns,” in the words of historian Thomas A. Bailey, Hollins “blew the town off the map.” Property was destroyed, but no lives were lost. Britain’s first lord of the admiralty feared that “We are fast ‘drifting’ into a war with the U. States,” but the British did not retaliate—largely due to preoccupation with the Crimean War—and an Anglo-American conflict was averted.¹⁴² As historian Robert Naylor has observed, the episode caused Britons to reevaluate the wisdom of “continuing to accept responsibility for a port that primarily served American interests.” The Britons would cease to be a major presence in the area.¹⁴³

Many Americans, including writers for the *Advocate of Peace* and Anna Ella Carroll, considered the American response excessive. Such criticism, however, did not necessarily indicate pro-British sentiment. A writer for the American Peace Society’s *Advocate of Peace* referred to the American destruction of Greytown as a “disgraceful affair” and an example of the horrors of war.¹⁴⁴ Carroll, who was the daughter of a Maryland governor and had a lifelong interest in politics, was motivated by her antipathy toward President Franklin Pierce.¹⁴⁵ In her 1856 work *A Review of Pierce’s Administration, Showing Its Only Popular Measures To Have Originated with the Executive of Millard Fillmore*, she highlighted the Greytown attack to

¹⁴¹ Lane, 112.

¹⁴² Richard L. Millett, “‘Patria Libre’,” *Wilson Quarterly* (1988), 98; Graham to Clarendon, Oct. 24, 1854, in R. W. Van Alstyne, ed., “Anglo-American Relations, 1853–1857,” *Amer. Hist. Rev.* (1937), 497, quoted in Bailey, 277; De Kalb, 244.

¹⁴³ Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 190.

¹⁴⁴ “War in Miniature,” *Adv. of Peace* (October 1854), 150.

¹⁴⁵ Janet L. Coryell, “Duty with Delicacy: Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland,” in *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders*, ed. Edward P. Crapol (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1987), 46.

demonstrate Pierce's poor decision-making and to show that his political motivations hampered rather than advanced American interests in the region.

In Carroll's opinion, the administration could not have selected a worse target than Greytown, as the town had been largely settled and built by American emigrés. It was "the *only* spot in Central America where civil and religious liberty had taken root in the soil," she noted, "and where the laws were as faithfully administered as in the United States." To Carroll, the attack deserved "the condemnation of the civilized world" and was "sufficient ground for impeachment."¹⁴⁶

She further suggested that the administration acted for political reasons and had ignored episodes more worthy of their involvement. Pierce, she insisted, was embarrassed by the Ostend Manifesto, which had revealed a secret plan to seize Cuba. "The whole civilized world were sneering at the game of 'hide and seek' which Pierce had played so long with Cuba," she explained, so Pierce used the opportunity "to redeem his own folly by the destruction of a defenseless village."¹⁴⁷ Referring to Pierce's desire for reelection in 1856, she wrote: "For that nomination ... he cannonaded Greytown."¹⁴⁸ She reminded her readers that Borland had protected a murderer and noted that the administration had refused to act in 1855 when an American "mother and child were killed" in Nicaragua, on their way to California. At the time, Secretary of State William Marcy insisted that the government could not protect Americans in the country, because "Nicaragua had no responsible

¹⁴⁶ Anna Ella Carroll, *A Review of Pierce's Administration, Showing Its Only Popular Measures To Have Originated with the Executive of Millard Fillmore* (1856), 58–59, 60 (MOA).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

government,' and was in a 'miserable condition.'"¹⁴⁹

Although some predicted war between the powers, such would not be the case. A writer for the Baltimore *Republican* had denounced Britain's "grasping ambition" and "treacherous double-dealing" with regard to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and suggested that war with Britain might "prove a blessing" to the United States.¹⁵⁰ But a writer for *Putnum's Monthly Magazine* insisted that rumors of war resurfaced "once, at least, during every few years" between the nations, and that the conflict was a matter "for diplomatic adjustment rather than national fisticuffs."¹⁵¹ The violent *Cyane* encounter was an aberration rather than the norm. Ultimately, each side was too distracted by other concerns—Britons with the Crimean War, Americans with the sectional crisis—for the conflict to develop beyond small skirmishes. And in 1860, British war-weariness would lead them to withdraw their claims to the region, while Americans found themselves focusing on a war at home.

Similarities between the United States and Great Britain made them each other's greatest rivals in Nicaragua in the 1850s. Each sought commercial supremacy, which led them to different opinions on the subject of isthmian transport. Therefore, strong American support for expansion inspired strong opposition to British expansion. And while some Americans remained leery of international commerce, most believed that American expansion—justified by the notion of manifest destiny—

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 60, 103, 104.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in the Washington D. C., *National Intelligencer*, quoted in Kenneth Stampp, *America in 1857* (New York, 1990), 195.

¹⁵¹ "Our Relations with England," *Putnum's Mthly. Mag.* (May 1856), 540.

could benefit all parties concerned.

CHAPTER VI THE INDIAN UPRISING, 1857–1858

For many Americans, the accomplishments of the British East India Company called to mind the glory of an earlier empire. While the British were suppressing the Indian Uprising¹ of 1857–1858, British “courage and constancy” reminded a *Christian Examiner* writer of “the Romans who went on buying and selling the land before their gates even after Hannibal’s army had encamped upon it.”² And when Parliament passed the India Bill, which moved control of the subcontinent from the Company to the British Crown, staff at *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* had “a feeling similar to that with which Gibbon heard the monks chanting in the Flavian amphitheater, and beheld the cows feeding in the Roman forum.”³

Although many Americans believed that Company mismanagement caused the Uprising, they also believed that, with the Company’s demise, something marvelous was ending. In 150 years of existence, the Company had amassed incredible holdings in both territory and population. And white, middle-class, Protestant Americans aspired to what the British had achieved, while also bringing “civilization” and Protestant Christianity to those with whom they traded. Just months after the conflict ended, a *Christian Examiner* writer referred to Mexico as “the Hindostan of our

¹ The event is here being termed an “uprising” to avoid the debate between its contemporaries—who usually called it a “mutiny”—and historians who have characterized it as the first war for Indian independence.

² “The Revolt and the English,” *Christian Examiner* (January 1858), 108.

³ “End of the British East India Company,” *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* (September 1858), 394.

Western hemisphere”⁴

American policymakers strongly sided with the British during the Indian Uprising because they identified with the British culturally. Like many Americans, President James Buchanan supported the British even though he considered their empire to be flawed. Accounts of Indian violence toward women during the conflict horrified many Americans and further strengthened their support for Great Britain.

The conflict had a negative but limited effect on the United States economy. American trade with India had been growing in the years preceding the conflict, but the India market did not garner widespread interest. Although the war suppressed India’s cotton supply and thus caused cotton prices to rise, Americans were more concerned with their nation’s economic depression at the time.

American support for the British in India was bolstered by the widespread belief that the Indians would benefit from Anglo-Saxon, Protestant governance. Many white Americans believed that they and the British were part of a superior race, and phrenologists and ethnologists provided scientific evidence of inherent racial differences that bolstered these notions of superiority. Meanwhile, members of several Protestant denominations were inclined to dismiss all religions other than their own as superstition and therefore saw the British as the Indians’ best hope.

Antiwar publications and those that sympathized with groups outside the category of white, middle-class, Protestants tended to criticize the British. The

⁴ “Review of Current Literature,” *Chr. Exam.* (November 1858), 456.

antiwar *Advocate of Peace*, published by the American Peace Society in Washington, D. C., deplored what the British were doing. Other Americans challenged British interpretations and tried to see the Indian perspective, and American Catholics and socialists were among the Britons' most virulent critics. Irish Catholics' opposition to British rule in Ireland inclined them to oppose British imperialism in general, including their rule in the subcontinent. Irish publications became popular sources for those who wanted to present an anti-British perspective—but they were not the only source. Charles Eliot Norton of the *North American Review* saw the Indian situation as a class-based issue. The *New-York Herald Tribune*, edited by Horace Greeley, featured among the most anti-British analyses of the Indian conflict and took the rare step of suggesting that imperialism was inherently flawed. The war was covered for the paper by the *Tribune*'s European correspondent, Karl Marx.

In American publications, updates on the Indian Uprising were surrounded by articles analyzing issues including the Dred Scott case and Bleeding Kansas. With slavery on readers' minds, some saw the Uprising as akin to a slave rebellion. The correlation between opinions of slavery and imperialism, however, was far from exact. As will be shown below, three prominent abolitionists held three very different opinions of the Indian Uprising. Yet the violence resonated with many Americans. Stories of nonwhite men committing acts of violence against white women provided the most powerful goad to American opposition to Indians and support for the British. Many accounts of Indians violating Englishwomen surfaced during the conflict. The story of Nana Sahib, a Muslim who in the summer of 1857 authorized the execution of scores of British women and children, gained far more publicity than any other

aspect of the conflict. For many Americans, this indelible image reinforced long-held notions of Muslim cruelty and confirmed their belief that British rule in India must continue. Dramas about Nana Sahib played to packed houses in the United States, where hatred of the villain was sufficiently intense to make actors afraid to accept the role.

Where crimes against Englishwomen were concerned, white Southern men could identify with Britons in India, otherwise known as Anglo-Indians. Anglo-Indians feared that Indians would violate Englishwomen, while white Southern men feared that slaves wanted to rape white American women. The violence of the act was not the only aspect of concern; such an act was considered a violation of a woman's honor and, as such, a threat to the social order. In both societies, whites allowed such threats to justify vigilante retribution. But in both cases, the perception of the threat was much greater than the threat itself. Although Nana Sahib was presented as representative of India, rather than as an aberration, Britons who were sent to India early in 1858 to follow up on cases of Indians "dishonouring" Englishwomen realized that most of the claims were spurious. And in the American South, the fear of slaves raping white women far exceeded the number of cases that actually did occur, while those few were exaggerated beyond their statistical significance.

Despite British misrepresentations, however, most Americans—even those most opposed to the British—believed that Indians would prosper best under continued British rule. And they also were inclined to support the United States' own commercial expansion, accompanied by goals of "civilizing" and Christianizing those with whom they traded.

The ostensible cause of the Indian Uprising was a perceived threat to Indian religions caused by the introduction of Enfield rifles to the native army. The rifles required powder cartridges—which were waterproofed with a coating of tallow and beeswax—and the native soldiers, or *sepoys*, had to bite the cartridges to open them. A false rumor spread that the coating was made of beef and pig fat.⁵ As American Consul to British India Charles Huffnagle explained in a letter to Secretary of State William Marcy, “to bite the cartridge the Hindoo would be defiled with the beef & the Mohammedan by the pork & ... consequently their cast would be lost forever.” The *sepoys* therefore perceived the new cartridges as a British attempt to destroy Indian religions and thus convert them to Christianity.⁶ Indians also criticized the British for co-opting the valuable parts of Indian trade and for never appointing Indians to the higher levels of government.⁷ On May 10, the day after the British imprisoned *sepoys* who refused to use the cartridges,⁸ native soldiers in Meerut began to fire on their officers, then burned the Europeans’ bungalows and killed their inhabitants. The next day, they won over Delhi’s three *sepoys* regiments and murdered or drove out the Europeans. In twenty-four hours, the *sepoys* had launched a full-scale political rebellion.⁹

⁵ Wayne G. Broehl, Jr., *Crisis of the Raj: The Revolt of 1857 through British Lieutenants’ Eyes* (Hanover, N. H., 1986), 49–50; Embree, xii.

⁶ Charles Huffnagle, Calcutta, to William Marcy. Washington, D. C., June 29, 1857, Papers of the Consuls, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁷ Ainslee T. Embree, ed., *India in 1857: The Revolt Against Foreign Rule*, 2d ed. (Delhi, 1967), 4, 7, 5, 6.

⁸ Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857* (London, 1980), 77–79.

⁹ Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857*, ed. C. A. Bayly (Oxford, 1986), 17, 19; Embree, xii; Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*

The conflict's most notorious episode was the July 1857 massacre at Kanpur, a city in the province of Oudh. Nana Sahib led the rebels, who killed many British women and children and threw their corpses into Kanpur's well.¹⁰ Forces under General Henry Havelock defeated Nana's Sahib's forces, then found the mass British grave. Havelock moved toward Lucknow to relieve prisoners there but became a prisoner himself. Like the massacre at Kanpur, the rescue of the prisoners at Lucknow by Sir Colin Campbell—with bagpipe accompaniment—became an iconic episode of the conflict.¹¹

Early in 1858, the British government sent a committee to relieve British sufferers in India, but the committee members could not confirm any of the horror stories that had reached the West. It appeared that many of the stories of Indian atrocities were British lies.¹² The British defeated all native forces by July 1858, and in August the British Crown took over control of India from the East India Company.¹³

“The year 1857 will be henceforth known as the year of the Sepoy Revolt,” asserted a writer for Philadelphia's Presbyterian *Princeton Review* early in 1858. “No event of the year in any part of the world has been of deeper interest in the eyes of

(Ithaca, 1988), 201; Broehl, 50, 52.

¹⁰ Broehl, 137, 138, 140.

¹¹ Ibid., 140–41, 151–152, 155.

¹² *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: Third Series, Commencing with the Accession of William IV*, vol. CXLIX, 2d vol. of sess. (New York, 1971; orig. pub. London, 1858), 347; “British Retaliation in India,” *Advocate of Peace* (January/February 1858), 22.

¹³ Embree, xiii, Broehl, 255.

thoughtful men.”¹⁴ And the conflict inspired a variety of thoughtful responses. Interpretations of the conflict ranged from a *Princeton Review* writer’s demonizing of Indians—he characterized the conflict as “Satan versus God”—to an Irish American’s wish that “every English man, woman, and child in India should be put to the sword.”¹⁵ The war inspired widespread fascination. A writer for New York’s *Knickerbocker* observed that “British India, in its fortunes and misfortunes” was “arresting the current thoughts of all readers,”¹⁶ and Eliza Clitherall of Wilmington, North Carolina, believed that episodes in the “Hindoo War” had “surpass[ed] the most thrilling accounts, History has presented.”¹⁷

American policymakers strongly supported the British during the Uprising. At that time, President James Buchanan was trying to maintain rapprochement with British leaders; this is only the most obvious reason for his support. The British protectorate over Nicaragua’s Mosquito Coast had caused Anglo-American tension, and American policymakers were angered by British attempts to recruit Americans to fight in the Crimean War. But in a letter to Lord Clarendon, Buchanan assured the

¹⁴ “The Revolt of the Sepoys,” *Princeton Review* (January 1858), 27.

¹⁵ “The Present State of India,” *Prin. Rev.* (July 1858), 452; Charles Mackay, *Life and Liberty in America; or, Sketches of a Tour in the United States and Canada, 1857–8* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1859), 112–15, Making of America Internet database, University of Michigan, hereafter designated as MOA.

¹⁶ “The Amours of Warren Hastings,” *Knickerbocker* (March 1858), 313.

¹⁷ Eliza Carolina (Burgwin) Clitherall Books, Dec. 1, 1859, Southern Historical Collection (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.), quoted in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1988), 265. Editors’ tendency to report when European ships brought “nothing further” with regard to Indian events is further evidence that many Americans followed the conflict and its developments. (“Two Days Later from Europe,” *Columbus [Georgia] Enquirer* [Nov. 10, 1857], 2; see also “Four Days Later from Europe: Arrival of the Atlantic off Sandy Hook,” *Boston Evening Transcript* [Jan. 6, 1858], 2).

British foreign secretary that he was “very much gratified at the tone of public sentiment on the East Indian Insurrection.” He noted that Americans wished the British “success in putting down” the Uprising and added his belief that their “power, energy, & resources as a nation will speedily accomplish this object.”¹⁸

The president admitted, however, a belief of his that many pro-British Americans shared: that the East India Company had governed India poorly. He reflected on his years as American minister to England, during which time he had decided that British policy in India “might be improved; but your system is so ancient, so complicated, & so many vested rights are involved that I consider it would be presumption in me even to make suggestions.”¹⁹ American criticism of Company government does not signify opposition to imperialism. On the contrary, in blaming the Company, Buchanan avoided suggesting that imperialism was inherently wrong. Instead, the Uprising became an example of imperialism gone awry. One could believe that the Company had governed poorly and maintain that other governments and other countries—perhaps even the United States—could control other peoples and govern them well.

American policymakers tended to believe that a racial hierarchy existed and that whites should rule over nonwhites. In February 1858, American Minister to England George Dallas agreed with Lord Stratford de Redcliffe that Britain’s chance of keeping India was founded on “the resistless superiority of civilized intellect over

¹⁸ *The Works of James Buchanan*, ed. John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia and London, 1910), vol. 10, 123.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

an almost incurable barbarism.”²⁰ Charles Huffnagle, the United States’ consul in Calcutta when the conflict began, believed that “India must be reconquered ... & when reconquered *must be held by a large European force*.”²¹ And during the conflict, Englishman Charles Mackay discussed the conflict with senators and congressmen in Washington, D. C. As the policymakers praised Henry Havelock and excoriated Nana Sahib, Mackay noted, “Every one of them seemed to feel proud that he was of the same blood and lineage as the conquerors of India.” “It is the blood, sir,” one of the senators explained, “the noblest and best blood in the world—a blood that never was conquered, and never will be.”²²

For Americans with a financial stake in India, the Uprising was an extra burden during a time of domestic economic depression. American trade with India had been growing before the conflict, partially due to the greater availability of money and credit, the 1853 European crop failure, and the Crimean War.²³ Between 1850 and the beginning of the Uprising, American exports to Calcutta tripled and the value of American imports from India increased by more than 350 percent.²⁴

The rebellion’s effect on India’s cotton supply was cause for American concern. In April 1858, J. N. Cardozo, a long-time trusted observer of the cotton market, saw Europe’s and America’s depression as having a greater effect on the

²⁰ Susan Dallas, ed., *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas, While United States Minister to Russia 1837 to 1839, and to England 1856 to 1861* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892), 236.

²¹ G. Bhagat, *Americans in India, 1784–1860* (New York, 1970), 117, 97; Huffnagle to Marcy, June 29, 1857; Huffnagle to Lewis Cass, Washington, D. C., Dec. 28, 1857, Papers of the Consuls.

²² Mackay, 112.

²³ Bhagat, 111.

²⁴ Huffnagle to Marcy, Jan. 7, 1857; Bhagat, 111.

market than did the rebellion.²⁵ But despite this—and despite the fact that the depression had lessened domestic demand—the Uprising’s threat to Indian cotton production was cause for concern. Cotton cultivated in India was exported to the United States for manufacture. New Orleans merchant J. B. Gribble observed that the rebellion limited Indian productivity and thus lessened the trade.²⁶ And in September 1857, New York broker Charles W. Frederickson lamented that an extended “India war” would raise cotton prices to a level that “may sadly interfere with the machinery of Europe and America.”²⁷ The rebellion also put off British attempts to gain greater access to the cotton supply by improving transportation in the colony.²⁸

For white Americans without a financial stake in India, racial attitudes could influence their opinions of the conflict. Southern diarist Mary Chesnut considered William Howard Russell’s descriptions of British violence in *My Diary in India in the Year 1858–1859* not to have been to the British detriment, but “to *our* detriment.”²⁹ And a writer for the Unitarian *Christian Examiner*, citing British “courage and constancy” during the conflict, insisted that “It makes us proud to claim kindred with such a race.”³⁰ Meanwhile, works like Josiah Nott and George Gliddon’s *Types of*

²⁵ J. N. Cardozo, “Supply and Consumption of Cotton in 1858,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (April 1858), 514.

²⁶ Huffnagle to Marcy, Jan. 7, 1857; J. B. Gribble, “The Cotton Trade,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (November 1857), 556.

²⁷ Charles W. Frederickson, “New York Cotton Market for the Month Ending August 21,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (September 1857), 335.

²⁸ M. B. Hammond, *The Cotton Industry: An Essay in American Economic History* (New York, 1897; orig. pub. London, 1866), 251.

²⁹ C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (New Haven, Conn., 1981), 76–77. Emphasis added.

³⁰ “The Revolt and the English,” 108.

Mankind gave scientific credence to the notion that whites were atop a racial hierarchy. Nott and Gliddon wrote that one could “reasonably look for a preponderating brain” among Anglo-Saxons, who had “peopled North America, [and] reduced all India to vassalage.” This race was “remarkable for its conquests and its colonies,” they noted, and for “the extent of its civilization.”³¹

Many Americans adopted the British interpretation, in which the conflict was not British versus Indian, but rather British versus Muslim, and the object was control of the Hindu population, whom Muslims had governed for centuries before the British arrived. Americans came to regard hostility between Hindus and Muslims as “an essential feature of Indian life,” which thus “made necessary the benign intercession of British imperialism.”³² Such characterizations by British historians at the time, however, ignored episodes that contradicted their theories, such as rebellion among Hindus in Bengal.³³ The racial theory’s simplicity strengthened the idea that it must be correct. The Reverend J. Johnston Walsh, an American missionary in India, characterized Muslims as “proud, insolent, and sensual,” while Hindus were “mild, courteous, and intelligent.”³⁴ A writer for the *New Englander* noted that the Rajputana district—in northwestern India, bordering present-day Pakistan—was “full of rebels” and contained “the most war-like race in India, with perhaps the exception of the

³¹ J. C. Nott, M.D. and Geo. R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches ...* (7th edition: Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, & Co., 1855), 308, 310. From the unedited papers of Samuel George Morton (MOA).

³² Andrew J. Rotter, “Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947–1964,” *Journal of American History* (September 1994), 519.

³³ Rotter, 524; Salahuddin Malik, “Nineteenth Century Approaches to the Indian ‘Mutiny,’” *Journal of Asian History* (1973), 98.

³⁴ Townsend Walsh, *The Career of Dion Boucicault* (New York, 1915), 33–35.

Sikhs.”³⁵ A *Princeton Review* writer noted that mainly Muslims had rebelled, whereas Hindus had “taken but little part” in the rebellion and had themselves “been plundered in many instances by the revolted troops.”³⁶ In 1858, the *Advocate of Peace* quoted an explanation that “the Hindoo is not given to rebellion, he is content to serve.” With Muslims, on the other hand, there was

an actual hatred of British sovereignty. ... Being of a more warlike temper than the true Hindoos, the Sepoys are largely drawn from their ranks, especially in Northern India, where the present revolt has taken place.³⁷

A writer for the Quaker journal the *Friend* observed that the East India Company’s policy had been “to interfere as little as possible with the national religion, customs or prejudices” in India, and observers disagreed as to whether that policy delayed or caused the rebellion.³⁸ An *Albion* (1822–1876) writer, citing “interference with their religion” as the only known sepoy complaint, believed that a proclamation should have “disclaim[ed] any intention whatever of interfering with the religious observances or prejudices of the Natives.”³⁹ Others believed that the British should have proselytized. The *Advocate of Peace* quoted a *London Globe* observation that “disturbances have not broken out in the chief scenes of missionary labor and conversion.”⁴⁰ But Company employees sought profit in India, not the “civilizing” and Christianizing of Indians. The Company was “simply a trading company ...

³⁵ “The Fall of Delhi—Aspect of Affairs in India,” *New Englander* (Nov. 19, 1857), 187.

³⁶ “The Revolt of the Sepoys,” 35.

³⁷ *American Presbyterian*, reprinted in “Explanations of the Revolt in India,” *Adv. of Peace* (January/February 1858), 17.

³⁸ [Untitled editorial], *Friend* (Oct. 31, 1857), 63.

³⁹ “The Sepoy Revolt in Bengal,” *Albion* [New York] (July 18, 1857), 343.

⁴⁰ “Comments on the India[n] Revolt,” *Adv. of Peace* (January/February 1858), 19.

simply an invader,” observed a writer for *Brownson’s Quarterly Review*.⁴¹ The British had actually dismissed members of its native army who had become Christian, which led a writer for the *North American Review* to dismiss British plans to Christianize the subcontinent after the Uprising as “plausible; but nothing more.”⁴²

Many Americans saw Christianity as the only true religion and had little respect for Eastern beliefs.⁴³ In *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, William B. Reed—who helped conclude the Treaty of Tientsin with China—said that “there can be no true, effective enlightenment without Christianity.”⁴⁴ And as Protestants sang “The Time to favor Zion,” they implored God to “Set up thy throne where Satan reigns, / On Afric’s shore, on India’s plains.”⁴⁵ Meanwhile, a writer for Philadelphia’s *Princeton Review* implored Christians to rally for the British. “Not only are they our brethren in the flesh and in the faith,” he insisted,

but it is patent to all men, that the outbreak in India is the rising of the powers of darkness against the kingdom of light. It is heathenism against Christianity. It is Belial against Christ. It is Satan against God.⁴⁶

These people criticized the East India Company for ignoring Indian souls. A *Church Review* writer observed that, on a national day of fasting and prayer in Great Britain for victims of the conflict, many clergymen blamed the government for

⁴¹ “British Preponderance,” *Brownson’s Qtrly. Rev.* (October 1857), 552.

⁴² “The Rebellion in India,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (April 1858), 501.

⁴³ R. K. Gupta, *The Great Encounter: A Study of Indo-American Literary and Cultural Relations* (Riverdale, Md., 1987), 20–21.

⁴⁴ “American Missionaries and Thanksgiving Day,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (August 1859), 178; Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928–1937), v. 15, 461–62, hereafter *DAB*.

⁴⁵ “The Time to favor Zion,” *Church Psalmist, or Psalms and Hymns, for the Public, Social, and Private Use of Evangelical Christians*. 40th edition. (New York: Ivison & Phinney, 1856), 539 (MOA).

⁴⁶ “The Present State of India,” 452.

focusing too much on profit and for “gross neglect of its Christian duty.”⁴⁷ “We had taught them the art of war,” the Reverend W. B. Wroth informed his congregation that day at St. Philip’s Church in Clerkenwell, England, “but we had not taught them the law of Christian love.”⁴⁸ “The fatal error of the East India Company,” a *Princeton Review* writer insisted, “has been that they ignored their religion.”⁴⁹ Presbyterian clergyman Henry Ward Beecher concurred. “What is the morality of the British Empire,” he asked a year after the conflict, “whose sway in India has been almost purely commercial, and which has looked at men almost only in their relation to the opium-gardens and the indigo fields?”⁵⁰

The notion that God’s hand was behind the conflict—and that it was Providence that India should be Christianized—pervaded comments about the Uprising and its suppression. The *Advocate of Peace* quoted a Scots clergyman that India “has been entrusted, by Divine Providence, to our care” and that “great sin lies on the country and all the churches for neglecting the means God has put within our reach for ameliorating the condition of the millions in India.”⁵¹ *Graham’s Illustrated Magazine* published an Englishman’s belief that the British presence in India was God’s will—“committed by Providence to their charge”—and that the rebellion had been necessary to remind the British of their duty.⁵² If Great Britain “fails to give heed to the fearful lesson she is now learning,” a writer for the *Advocate of Peace* warned,

⁴⁷ “Religious Aspect of the Mutiny in India,” *Church Review* (January 1858), 625.

⁴⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 626.

⁴⁹ “The Present State of India,” 453.

⁵⁰ Henry Ward Beecher, *New Star Papers; or, Views and Experiences of Religious Subjects* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859), 386 (MOA); *DAB*, v. 2, 129–30.

⁵¹ “Comments on the India[n] Revolt,” 18.

⁵² “The New Museum at the India House,” *Graham’s Illustrated Magazine* (October 1858), 358.

“a mightier voice than ours may be expected to address her in tones that must be heard. Providence will *compel* England to be faithful to her enormous trust.”⁵³ And in a curious interpretation, a writer for the *Princeton Review* suggested that Providence was not at play in India during the conflict. “The awful horrors of this revolt show us the real character of heathenism and Mohammedanism,” he wrote, “when the restraints of Providence are taken off.”⁵⁴

Some saw the conflict as the beginning of the end for Eastern religions. The Reverend J. Johnston Walsh, the only survivor of the Fatehgarh mission, saw the uprising as the beginning of the collapse of Islam, which had been predicted “in the prophecy of the Apocalypse,” and he saw the duel as God’s way of preparing India for mass conversion, by making the “heathen meek, humble, and holy.”⁵⁵ After the British successfully suppressed the Indians, William B. Reed recalled his time in “the dark, cold shadow of Pagan civilization,” as was found in “what we may hope to be the ruins of Hindu or Mohammedan superstition.”⁵⁶

But more liberal American Protestants tried to see the Indian perspective. The *Christian Examiner* noted the horror of Indian crimes but reminded readers that “it was maddening too to the Hindoos to think of the wrongs and insults of ages” upon them. “The Hindoo side we have not heard, and may never hear.”⁵⁷ The journal’s staff asserted that “the religious convictions and sincere worships of others are as sacred as

⁵³ Quoted in “Explanations of the Revolt in India,” 20–21.

⁵⁴ “The Revolt of the Sepoys,” 28.

⁵⁵ Rev. J. Johnston Walsh, *A Memorial of the Futtehgarh Mission and her Martyred Missionaries* (Philadelphia, 1859), 309, 322, quoted in Bernard Saul Stern, “America’s View of India and Indians, 1857–1900” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1956), 43, 44.

⁵⁶ “American Missionaries and Thanksgiving Day,” 177–78.

⁵⁷ “The Hindoos,” *Chr. Exam.* (March 1858), 174.

our own" and advocated treating all religions and races "with tenderness and respect." "Fancy a number of Mussulman Imams preaching the rottenness of Christianity ... on an Easter Sunday," they suggested early in 1858, quoting the *London Daily News*. "What do you suppose the feeling of the people would be?"⁵⁸ A writer for the *Friend* also lamented that "There is no native historian" who could "spread before the world ... the long series of acts of duplicity and deeds of blood, by which the feeble Indian governments have been seized on, and forced to lie prostrate under the heel of a foreign oppressor."⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Irish Catholics had little sympathy for the British. In July 1857, a writer for *Albion* noted that *New York Herald* writers wrote down to the "intelligence and [the] prejudices" of "Irish servants" when they described "the wrongs perpetrated by the Britons upon the Hindoos" and "chuckle[d] over these disastrous occurrences."⁶⁰ And a *Church Review* writer observed that, on Great Britain's day of fasting and prayer for casualties of the war, Roman Catholics "not only refused to recognize the day, but have fairly gloated over the hellish scenes of violence, carnage, and lust."⁶¹

The American Catholic community, indeed, had little sympathy for the British in India. Orestes Brownson was the editor of *Brownson's Quarterly Review*. As a Catholic with socialist leanings, Brownson was a member of two of the groups most

⁵⁸ "Asiatic Civilization," *Chr. Exam.* (July 1859), 21; "The Revolt and the English," *Chr. Exam.* (January 1858), 111.

⁵⁹ [Untitled editorial], *Friend* (Oct. 31, 1857), 63.

⁶⁰ "The Sepoy Revolt in Bengal," *Albion* (July 18, 1857), 343.

⁶¹ "Religious Aspect of the Mutiny in India," 626.

inclined to oppose British imperialism.⁶² Writers for his journal saw Indian violence as retaliation for the Britons' "century of bad faith, misrule, oppression, and torture." They admitted that they would "not grieve immoderately were Great Britain to lose all her foreign possessions," because they saw the empire as one that "enslaves or cripples all nations, and ruins innumerable souls." They went so far as to suggest that India had been "wealthier, the land was better cultivated, and the people were less oppressed" under Muslim rule and that "No nation is really enriched by trade" because increased production overly burdened the only true sources of wealth—land and labor. But the *Brownson's* staff acknowledged that few would find their argument persuasive and feared that Britain would emerge from the rebellion stronger than ever.⁶³

Writers for antiwar publications and people who regarded the situation in India as a class issue were also less inclined to support the British. Writers for the American Peace Society's *Advocate of Peace*, out of Boston, did not excuse Indian violence, but one quoted a British peace journal that ridiculed Great Britain's tone of "mingled astonishment and indignation" at the Uprising. What other reaction, he mused, could the British expect from people who had been converted into "mere machines for murder" and were governed "*for purely selfish purposes*"?⁶⁴ The journal quoted a writer for the *Boston Advertiser*, who insisted that "however

⁶² *DAB*, v. 3, 178–79.

⁶³ "British Preponderance," 550, 547–49.

⁶⁴ "Causes of the Indian Rebellion," *Advocate of Peace* (January/February 1858), 15.

favorably [Company rule] may compare with the tyrannies it displaced," it had been "itself a tyranny, hard, inexorable, and often abusive."⁶⁵

The staff of the *North American Review* sympathized with the Indians. For at least one member of the staff, the conflict was a class issue. Charles Eliot Norton wrote for the *Review* and became editor several years later. Eight years before the Uprising, Norton had visited India as an employee of East India merchants for whom he had worked since his graduation from Harvard University.⁶⁶ In India, Norton was distressed at the disparity of wealth between colonized and colonizers—such as natives' "low mud hovels" crowded between the Britons' "large and often handsome houses." This close-up view of "degradation and misery in a society governed by a privileged minority" awakened his social consciousness and influenced his writings, and may provide a clue to similar sentiment among the other *North American Review* staff. Norton's support had its limits; during his trip, he found the natives "shiftless, easily bribed," and neither truthful nor virtuous, and he believed that the British presence was to their benefit.⁶⁷ But the *Review* repeatedly took the British to task. One writer for the publication suggested that the British "take warning" and reconsider their Irish policy before they had another rebellion on their hands.⁶⁸ An April 1858 article stated that Great Britain's rule in India was closing "with a course of fraud and falsehood, of forgery and treason, as stupendous as ever lay at the foundation of a

⁶⁵ *Boston Advertiser*, quoted in "Explanations of the Revolt in India," 17.

⁶⁶ Kermit Vanderbilt, *Charles Eliot Norton: Apostle of Culture in a Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 30–31, 33.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 34–35; quotes, 34, 35.

⁶⁸ "Ireland, Past and Present," *N. Amer. Rev.* (January 1858), 152–53.

great empire.”⁶⁹ And in another article, a *Review* writer insisted that “he would be hopelessly stupid indeed” who could not see the reason behind even the war’s “most revolting scenes.” He reminded readers that Warren Hastings’s trial sixty-five years earlier had shown the whole world “that no people on earth were worse treated than the Hindoos. ... Yet what was done to relieve them?” he asked. “Was not the same policy pursued by Hastings’s successors?”⁷⁰

Others also regarded the situation as a class issue and sided with the Indians. The *New-York Daily Tribune*, for example, denounced imperialism thoroughly. The paper’s editor was the socialist Horace Greeley, and the *Tribune* tended to attract those who held “varieties of socialist thought.”⁷¹ Managing editor Charles A. Dana had met Karl Marx in Europe in 1848, and Marx impressed him.⁷² In 1851, their acquaintanceship resulted in an impoverished Marx becoming the *Tribune*’s European correspondent. Marx—with assistance from Friedrich Engels—wrote dozens of columns about the Indian Uprising, many of which appeared as leading articles in the paper.⁷³

Marx and Engels criticized Britain’s presence in India and emphasized the liabilities of imperialism. The *Tribune*’s front page on October 13, 1857, explained that disorganization prevented the British from saving both the Kanpur and Lucknow

⁶⁹ “Ludlow’s *British India*,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (April 1858), 567.

⁷⁰ “The Rebellion in India,” 491, 490.

⁷¹ Morton Borden, “Some Notes on Horace Greeley, Charles Dana, and Karl Marx,” *Journalism Quarterly* (Fall 1957), 459.

⁷² Janet E. Steele, *The Sun Shines for All: Journalism and Ideology in the Life of Charles A. Dana* (Syracuse, N. Y., 1993), 25.

⁷³ Steele, 35. Greeley and Dana both found Marx’s beliefs extreme, but they were still willing to publish his writings (Steele, 35; Borden, 461).

garrisons. There was “hardly anything in the annals of war,” Marx insisted, “to equal the stupidity which directed the [garrisons’] operations.”⁷⁴ He noted that the Britons were indignant when other European powers confiscated land, but they seized the “independent” province of Oudh “violently ... in open infraction even of the acknowledged treaties.”⁷⁵ He also noted that money “out of the pockets of the people of England” provided military support in India, while the “considerable” profits made in India went to far fewer people, mainly East India Company employees.⁷⁶ And Marx and Engels described British torture to explain why the Indians were right “to expel the foreign conquerors who have so abused their subjects.”⁷⁷

The conflict reminded many Americans of a prominent domestic issue. Apparent similarities between imperialism and slavery—both systems in which whites ruled over nonwhites—would suggest that American attitudes toward the rebellion fell along sectional lines, with Northerners supporting the insurgents and Southerners siding with the British. The correlation is far from exact, but additional evidence exists to support such a thesis. “It strikes us,” a writer for the abolitionist *National Era* (1847–1860) asserted in July 1857, “that journals which defend Slavery of any kind, should sympathize everywhere, *not* with the oppressed, but with *the*

⁷⁴ Karl Marx, “The Revolt in India,” *N-Y Daily Trib.* (Oct. 13, 1857), 1, reprinted in K. Marx and F. Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857–1859* (Moscow, 1960), 102–03. Also see Marx, “The Revolt in India,” *New-York Daily Tribune* (Sept. 15, 1857), 1, also in Marx and Engels, 78–85.

⁷⁵ Marx, “The Annexation of Oudh,” *N-Y Daily Trib.* (May 28, 1858), 1, also in Marx and Engels, 156, 150.

⁷⁶ Marx, “The Revolt in India,” *N-Y Daily Trib.* (Oct. 3, 1857), 1, also in Marx and Engels, 89, 86.

⁷⁷ Marx, “Investigation of Tortures in India,” *N-Y Daily Trib.* (Sept. 17, 1857), 1, also in Marx and Engels, 72–77, quote 77.

oppressor.”⁷⁸ In this respect, James Holcombe’s beliefs were consistent. In a speech to Southern farmers, Holcombe—a professor of law at the University of Virginia and an ardent defender of states’ rights—asserted that the Indians’ violence demonstrated the need for continued British rule in the subcontinent. Because he considered the Indians to be more civilized than African slaves, he used the Uprising to justify the need to maintain slavery, by suggesting that emancipation would lead to chaos. “Are the relations of England to India, so anomalous,” he asked in November 1858, “that it would be unsafe to accept generalizations drawn from the experience of other communities?”

Are the Hindoos unfit for liberty? Not more so than the African. Is despotism necessary in India, because it is problematical whether [order could be maintained] under more liberal institutions? The danger of license and anarchy would be far more imminent, from an emancipation of our slaves.

However stringent conditions were in India, Holcombe asserted, Southern conditions must be moreso.⁷⁹

During the Civil War, the Indian Uprising’s resemblance to a slave rebellion remained strong and ominous in Southerners’ minds. A writer for the Confederate *Index* played on British fears of “another Cawnpore” to encourage British support for the American South.⁸⁰ And in July 1862, South Carolinian Mary Boykin Chesnut finished reading Edward Money’s *The Wife and the Ward*, which was set at the siege of Kanpur, and mused, “Who knows what similar horrors may lie in wait for us!” She

⁷⁸ “Sympathy for the Sepoys,” *National Era* [Washington, D. C.] (July 30, 1857), 122.

⁷⁹ James P. Holcombe, “Is Slavery Consistent with Natural Laws?” *Southern Literary Messenger* (December 1858), 405; *DAB*, vol. 9, 134.

⁸⁰ Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (Leicester, 1978), 165.

had recently seen a play about the rebellion, called *The Siege of Lucknow*, at a small theater in Washington, D. C., and recalled her “thrill of terror” when the Indians “jump[ed] over the parapets.” They reminded her of slaves—“These faces were like so many of the same sort at home”—and she acknowledged that America’s slaves would probably one day also rise, although they had not yet. “John Brown had failed to fire their hearts, and they saw no cause to rise and burn and murder us all—like the women and children were treated in the Indian Mutiny,” she wrote. “But how long would they resist the seductive and irresistible call ‘only rise, kill, and be free’?”⁸¹

But the correlation was not so neat as the above evidence suggests. A person could support slavery and oppose imperialism, or vice versa. Mary Chesnut opposed the Indians’ violence, but she was also put off by British atrocities. She reflected on the British retribution—which included shooting India’s princes after the British had secured them as prisoners—and admitted to being “puzzled” over what “the best of Christians do ... when they are soldiers.”⁸² A writer for the pro-slavery *Richmond South* opposed what he considered to be British tyranny in India, although a writer for the abolitionist *National Era* criticized the *South* for supporting tyranny abroad while perpetuating it at home. “Are the native Indians defrauded of their wages?” he asked. “Are they ill fed, are they at the mercy of their Anglo-Saxon lords? How is it with the negro slaves in and around Richmond?”⁸³ And many white Northerners supported the British, because they believed in white superiority and therefore believed that Indians

⁸¹ *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 409.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 261.

⁸³ “Sympathy for the Sepoys,” *National Era* (July 30, 1857), 122.

were better off under British rule. While in India in 1854, New Yorker John Ireland noted that “British ‘pluck’ is proverbial, and no one need be prouder of it than an American—for we are all of the same blood, descending from the conqueror or conquered at Hastings.” These descendants, he continued, “are the civilizing pioneers of the world.”⁸⁴

American abolitionists’ reactions to the Indian Uprising further belie the notion that there was a close correlation between attitudes toward imperialism and attitudes toward slavery. Three leaders of the antislavery community had three very different takes on the war. Frederick Douglass counted revolutionary insurrectionists Joseph Cinque, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Madison Washington among his heroes, and he held Toussaint Louverture in particularly high esteem.⁸⁵ In January 1860, he described Toussaint to an English audience as “the noble liberator and law giver of his brave and dauntless people.”⁸⁶ As Toussaint’s Haitian revolution had in the 1790s, the Indian Uprising served for this generation of American Southerners to inspire fear of slave revolts in America. But Douglass, perhaps realizing that the sepoys’ violence had vilified the rebels in Western eyes—and that supporting them would therefore be politically unwise—denied a similarity between the Uprising and a slave rebellion. Instead, he used the events to criticize antiblack prejudice—a more common ill than proslavery sentiment—and to contrast Indian violence with

⁸⁴ John Ireland, *From Wall Street to Cashmere: Five Years in Asia, Africa, and Europe* (New York, 1859), 519.

⁸⁵ “Toussaint L’Ouverture,” Douglass Papers (LC), r19, copy 1, p. 16, quoted in Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1984), 271.

⁸⁶ John W. Blassingame, ed. *Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, vol. 3, 1855–63 (New Haven, Conn., 1985), 297.

Americans' peaceful pursuit of abolitionism. Douglass opposed the "class of abolitionists"—whom he termed "Garrisonians" after William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of the antislavery newspaper the *Liberator*—that took pride in their "Anglo-Saxon blood, as flippantly as those who profess to believe in the natural inferiority of races." In a speech at the City Hall in Glasgow, Scotland, the same month that he praised Toussaint, Douglass asserted that John Brown's plan in occupying Harpers Ferry "was not to shed blood or destroy property, as the insurrectionists in India had done," but simply, and peacefully, to help slaves to escape.⁸⁷

Douglass resented the fact that the American public praised white liberators while their attitude toward black abolitionists was disinterested if not hostile.⁸⁸ He used the image of India's military—a few white officers governing a large number of nonwhite sepoys—to describe the subordination of black abolitionists to white abolitionists. "We may fight," he told a New York audience in August 1857, "but we must fight like the Seapoys of India, under white officers."⁸⁹ Douglass's gripe carried a clear threat to his white listeners. At that time, the bloody saga of the sepoys' uprising against their white rulers was front-page news in America. Against the stories of carnage and chaos and with the implied threat of a violent uprising of black abolitionists, his words must have sent chills up the spines of "Garrisonians."

William Lloyd Garrison, meanwhile, switched from a pro-British to an anti-British stance during the conflict. Early in the Uprising, Garrison did not question

⁸⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, 618. Mary Chesnut interpreted the connection to Harpers Ferry differently by insisting that "the Sepoys only did what they laud and magnify John Brown for trying to get the negroes to do here" (*Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 440).

⁸⁸ Martin, 271.

⁸⁹ *Douglass Papers*, vol. 3, 203.

British accounts of the suppression.⁹⁰ Quoting the *London Post*, the *Liberator* stated that the massacre ordered by Nana Sahib made blood burn “with the hottest desire for vengeance that ever a nation felt.” By October, however, Garrison and his colleagues had changed their minds. Although most American newspapers described London’s October mourning day for British casualties sympathetically, the *Liberator* insisted that it was “little short of blasphemy for a people to subjugate nations, rob them, apply physical tortures, and goad them to insurrection, and then go over the solemn farce of Fast days and prayers.” Garrison maintained an anti-British stance for the duration of the war and quoted frequently from Irish newspapers, a rich source of anti-British diatribe. Noting the British cry for “Blood! Blood! Blood!,” the *Liberator* reprinted an Irishman’s poetic opinion that that was “a horrible cry in a Christian land! / Where they boast that the Bible’s in every one’s hand.”⁹¹

Poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier, despite his strong and sincere interest in Indian culture, supported imperialism and praised the Scottish troops that relieved their European brethren in the Lucknow garrison in his poem “The Pipes of Lucknow.” His poem was based on a letter written by M. de Banneroi, a French physician who was rescued at Lucknow on September 26, 1857.⁹² In the letter, de Banneroi described the Scots’ arrival just as fellow prisoner Jessie Brown seemed to have gone delirious.⁹³ The account was widely reprinted and inspired Whittier’s poem and many other forms of creative response. The poem read, in part:

⁹⁰ E.g., “Horrors of the War in India,” *Liberator* (Sept. 25, 1857), 156; “The War in British India,” *Liberator* (Oct. 2, 1857), 159.

⁹¹ “Fasting and Prayer,” *Liberator* (Oct. 23, 1857), 176 (mismarked as 170).

⁹² “The Relief of Lucknow,” *Liberator* (Jan. 22, 1858), 16.

⁹³ *Plays by Dion Boucicault*, ed. Peter Thomson (Cambridge, 1984), 220–21.

A burst of wild thanksgiving
 Mingled woman's voice and man's;
 "God be praised!—the march of Havelock!
 The piping of the clans" ...

Round the silver domes of Lucknow,
 Moslem mosque and Pagan shrine,
 Breathed the air to Britons dearest,
 The air of Auld Lang Syne.⁹⁴

The poem appeared in the *National Era*, an abolitionist paper for which Whittier was corresponding editor. And the poem's publication in the paper shows that one could simultaneously support imperialism and oppose slavery. A *National Era* column from July 1857 clarifies this stance. "Unlike Slavery in this country," the columnist explained, "English rule in India gradually enlightens and improves the condition of the subject race." The author went on to express hope that someday a "partially Anglicised" India could become independent of "the country which gave her civilization and its benefits."⁹⁵ Abolitionists, therefore, could abhor slavery while asserting the need for nonwhite peoples to remain under European tutelage until they had absorbed enough "Anglicization" and "civilization" to be independent.⁹⁶

Americans did not tire of the story of the relief of Lucknow. Plays about the

⁹⁴ Robert Penn Warren, ed. *John Greenleaf Whittier's Poetry: An Appraisal and a Selection* (Minneapolis, 1971), 140–42.

⁹⁵ "The Rebellion in India," *National Era* (July 23, 1857), 118.

⁹⁶ This explanation is more convincing than that of Robert Penn Warren, who saw "The Pipes of Lucknow" as a metaphor for Whittier's awakening to the evils of slavery and thus to abolitionism. For Warren, the Scots' leaving home meant that they had "grown up"; despite adversity, they triumphed over the trials of adulthood. Warren considered the poem's "Indian tiger" and "jungle-serpent" to represent slaves, portrayed as evil because their suffering forced Whittier "from the daydreams and neurotic indulgences of his youth into the broad daylight of mature and objective action." ("Those poor slaves in Dixie ... they were the enemy.") Warren termed the poem a "gentle little piece of nostalgia." But Whittier's support for the British and opposition to the Indians is so overt as to call into question any theory that does not simply admit his pro-imperial stance (Warren, 39–41).

rebellion began to appear in late 1857, and in February 1858 a play titled *Jessie Brown; or, the Relief of Lucknow*, by Irish playwright Dion Boucicault, debuted in New York.⁹⁷ The message of the mediocre drama was “British racial superiority and Indian inferiority,” and the Irishman’s political propaganda has been deemed “too naive to be offensive.”⁹⁸ But *Jessie Brown*’s popularity eclipsed that of all other rebellion plays, including those that were produced in Britain.⁹⁹ Boucicault was living in New York City at the time, and he knew that the story of Jessie’s courage and hope and the prisoners’ rescue at the eleventh hour would “excite and move” his audiences.¹⁰⁰ The popularity of *Jessie Brown* demonstrates Americans’ interest in the events, their strongly pro-British stance, and the power of their perception of Nana Sahib as the quintessential inhuman Indian rebel. Earlier, a furious, Indian-hating London audience had pelted an actor playing the Nana in a similar play with “bottles, sticks, hats and even umbrellas,” and the actor had to be whisked away to prevent further harm by the mob that had assembled outside the stage door. The reaction had nothing to do with the quality of the actor’s performance, but with the character that he was playing. No New York actor would take the role in *Jessie Brown*, and so Boucicault himself played Nana Sahib. It is noteworthy that New York actors feared similar violence from American audiences.¹⁰¹

Current historians dispute Nana Sahib’s role in the uprising, though no Britons

⁹⁷ Brantlinger, 205; Robert Fawkes, *Dion Boucicault* (London, 1979), 134.

⁹⁸ Thomson, 220–21, 7; Brantlinger, 206.

⁹⁹ Brantlinger, 205–06.

¹⁰⁰ Dion Boucicault, *The Dolmen Boucicault: with an essay by the Editor on the Theatre of Dion Boucicault*, ed. David Krause (Ireland, 1965), 25; Fawkes, 98.

¹⁰¹ Fawkes, 99, 98; Walsh, 54–55.

or Americans in 1857 questioned his guilt.¹⁰² The Nana was the adopted son of Kanpur's last leader, but the East India Company, in order to enlarge its holdings, asserted that only natural heirs could inherit kingdoms. Therefore, Nana Sahib inherited his father's wealth, but had no kingdom to rule.¹⁰³ Nana Sahib rallied troops to take control of Kanpur, which led to the massacre of British women and children under his orders on July 15, 1857. News of the massacre traveled quickly, and his name became known and hated. Britons and Americans reduced their perspective of the Indian subcontinent to an image of Nana Sahib, which in turn fueled racist ideas of Indians in general. Americans envisioned Nana Sahib as a "fiend," a "satan," and a "cold-blooded and cowardly butcher."¹⁰⁴ They did not perceive him as a stupid beast who breathed fire and killed; writers asserted that he was a cold but rational murderer. This rational cruelty made him more dangerous and denied him the pity that one could feel for a dumb brute. And all of this made him easier to hate.

With "his carcanet of brilliants, his rustling tunic, his walnut physiognomy, and a magnificent pair of mustachios," Dion Boucicault first stepped onto the stage as Nana Sahib at Wallack's Theater in New York on February 22, 1858. News of the massacre at Kanpur had only reached the United States a month or two before, and the public was still outraged at the events. Fortunately for Boucicault, members of the gallery threw nothing at him and were reportedly awed by his appearance.¹⁰⁵ The play was the hit of the season. It ran for six weeks in New York and ended only to keep an

¹⁰² Thomson, 14, n. 9; Broehl, 139.

¹⁰³ Broehl, 138.

¹⁰⁴ Brantlinger, 201; "Horrors of the War in India," *Liberator* (Sept. 25, 1857), 156; "The War in British India," *Liberator* (Oct. 2, 1857), 159; "The Rebellion in India," 491.

¹⁰⁵ Walsh, 55; Thomson, 231; *Dolmen Boucicault*, 25.

engagement in Boston. The troupe performed *Jessie Brown* in Philadelphia in May and returned to New York in September.¹⁰⁶

Boucicault wanted his play to be popular with American audiences, and he worked with their knowledge of the events as gleaned from newspaper accounts and unfounded rumors.¹⁰⁷ He played to his audiences' perceptions of Indians as weak; Geordie the Scotsman asserts that Indians would only fight with a ratio of a thousand to one. It also played on stereotypes of Muslim cruelty and lust. In the play, Jessie describes the Lucknow mosque in which she and the others were trapped as "a church where they worship the deevil." Boucicault's inhuman Nana Sahib orders his assistant to "cut off the right hands of these prisoners, and let their bodies swing from the heights of this mosque." And the only reason that Boucicault gives for Nana Sahib's crimes is the Nana's wish to kidnap a British woman, Mrs. Campbell, for his harem.¹⁰⁸

The playwright's willingness to portray Indians as treacherous reveals extensive American antagonism toward them. When necessary, Boucicault wrote much more diplomatically. In 1859, he wrote a play about slavery titled *The Octaroon; or, Life in Louisiana*.¹⁰⁹ Actor Joseph Jefferson, who created the role of Salem Scudder in the play, noted that the "dialogue and characters ... made one feel for the South, but the action proclaimed against slavery, and called loudly for its

¹⁰⁶ Fawkes, 98, 99, 100, 186.

¹⁰⁷ Thomson, 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Plays by Dion Boucicault*, 104, 118, 119, 112–13.

¹⁰⁹ Thomson, 8.

abolition.”¹¹⁰ When dealing with the Indian Uprising, Boucicault had not felt compelled to give both points of view.

The fact that Boucicault emphasized Indian abuse of women and children in his play shows how well he knew his audience, for gendered attitudes united Americans and Britons against the Indians most of all. Westerners would have agreed with the Reverend David Blount, who in the play informs Nana Sahib that “in every religion, and of all time, the weakness of woman protects her life, and makes her safety sacred.”¹¹¹ In the opinion of most Britons and Americans, no true “man” would harm women and children.

But Englishwomen were not the only damsels who British men perceived themselves as saving in India. By characterizing Hindus as effeminate and Muslims as evil men, the British described a situation in which their own heroic, masculine presence was necessary to rescue Hindus from Muslims. East India Company officials had developed the notion of Bengalis as effeminate to suggest that India needed a stern, masculine presence, to “impose on her the discipline she is too feckless to impose on herself.”¹¹² The distinction between “hard-fighting, masculine, Indian men from the north and west—usually Muslims—and weak, effeminate Hindus from the south and Bengal” became widely accepted.¹¹³ New Yorker Robert Minturn visited India and recorded his belief that Indian soldiers lacked “manly courage” and that

¹¹⁰ Joseph Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson* (New York, 1890), 162, also quoted in Thomson, 8.

¹¹¹ Boucicault, 122.

¹¹² Richard Cronin, *Imagining India* (New York, 1989), 148, also quoted in Rotter, 527.

¹¹³ Rotter, 526.

India was inhabited by a “cowardly and effeminate race.”¹¹⁴ During the conflict, a writer for the *Christian Examiner* noted that, before the conflict, Hindus were deemed “gentle even to effeminacy.”¹¹⁵ Some suggested that Indians could become less effeminate if they adopted Western ways. When missionary James Scott learned that native Christians had not abandoned their faith during the conflict, he concluded that the converts were becoming “more manly.”¹¹⁶

Many Americans already perceived the Muslim world as immoral and Muslim men as lustful. In 1839, a writer for the *North American Review* had stated that, in Islamic society, “human life has little value, and human faith still less.”¹¹⁷ The *Princeton Review* noted that Islam “ranks an unmentionable emblem of lust and a patroness of murder among the deities to be daily worshipped” and referred to “the deep hatred” that Muslims “have always borne European ladies for their freedom and their virtue.”¹¹⁸ Soon after the conflict, a *Christian Examiner* writer suggested that “In Arabia, Persia, India and China the condition of woman on the whole corresponds with the stage of civilization” and acknowledged that “We are accustomed to condemn the Mohammedans for despotism, polygamy, and the degradation of women.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Robert Minturn, Jr., *From New York to Delhi* (New York, 1858), 180, 206–07, quoted in Rotter, 528.

¹¹⁵ “The Hindoos,” 173.

¹¹⁶ James P. Alter and John Alter, “Half-Way House: Presbyterians in Farrukhabad, 1838–1915,” *Presbyterian History* (1984), 206.

¹¹⁷ “Stephens’s *Travels in the East*,” *N. Amer. Rev.* (January 1839), 191.

¹¹⁸ “The Revolt of the Sepoys,” 28; “The Present State of India,” 460.

¹¹⁹ “Asiatic Civilization,” 23, 22. Contemporary authors who wrote about the United States alluded to the *Arabian Nights* to describe immoral settings such as saloons, brothels, and Wall Street, referred to greedy, lustful men as “Turks,” and portrayed prostitutes as members of harems or as *houris*—maidens in the Muslim paradise (E.g., [George G. Foster], *New York in Slices: by An Experienced*

Meanwhile, British men were portrayed as masculine and heroic. Even Muslims became “effete,” according to a writer for *American Presbyterian*, when compared with the “strong handed Englishman.”¹²⁰ And during the conflict, S. R. Calthrop, formerly of Cambridge University, presented *A Lecture on Physical Development, and Its Relations to Mental and Spiritual Development* to members of the American Institute of Instruction in Norwich, Connecticut. Calthrop noted that Englishmen had “just done battle at fearful odds on the burning plains of India, on behalf of helpless women and slaughtered babies,” and he partially attributed their victory to English boys’ “love of manly sports,” which kept them from “corruption and decay.”¹²¹

For many Westerners, the “helpless women and slaughtered babies” of whom Calthrop spoke had cemented the need for British intervention and continued control. The episode that most horrified Britons and Americans was the Kanpur massacre. The *Liberator*’s account in early October 1857 was typical, with its lurid description of women “stripped naked, then beheaded and thrown into a well,” and children being “hurled down alive upon their butchered mothers, whose blood reeked on their

Carver ... (New York: W. F. Burgess, 1848), 16, 94; George Lippard, *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million* (Cincinnati: H. M. Rulison, 1853), 36, 147, 155, 156, 178, 243, 262; John H. Warren, Jr., *Thirty Years’ Battle with Crime* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1970), 17, 18, 105, 117; Edward Winslow Martin, *The Secrets of the Great City ...* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Jones, Brothers & Co., 1868), 310; and Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* [New York: DeWitt and Davenport Publishers, 1854], 143).

¹²⁰ “Explanations of the Revolt in India,” 17.

¹²¹ S. R. Calthrop, *A Lecture on Physical Development, and Its Relations to Mental and Spiritual Development* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1859), 24 (MOA).

mangled bodies.”¹²² The *National Era* reported that “the women were slaughtered after being fiendishly outraged.”¹²³ Not even writers for sources that were inclined to see the Indian perspective could excuse such deeds. Boston’s *Advocate of Peace* acknowledged the horror “excited ... throughout the civilized world” of “the abominable outrages inflicted by the Sepoys on helpless women and children.”¹²⁴

For Americans, the image of Indians killing women and children became the conflict’s most indelible aspect. John Ireland summed up Kanpur’s violence as “the horrid massacre and unmentionable atrocities committed on defenceless women by that fiend Nena Sahib and his Satanic horde.”¹²⁵ American Consul Charles Huffnagle repeatedly noted that Indian atrocities were committed “especially toward the women.”¹²⁶ And a writer for the *National Era* asserted that “Men who will in this age ravish and hack to pieces innocent women, and butcher little children, should be swept from the face of the earth.”¹²⁷ The memory did not fade. More than two years after the conflict, Eliza Clitherall of Wilmington, North Carolina, wrote in her diary that the war’s intrigue derived from the Indians’ “tragic cruelties, upon defenceless women & Innocent children.”¹²⁸ And in the summer of 1862, her fellow Southern diarist Mary Chesnut also thought back on India and dwelled on the ways in which

¹²² “The War in British India,” *Liberator* (Oct. 2, 1857), 159.

¹²³ “The Massacre at Cawnpore,” *Nat’l Era* (Oct. 29, 1857), 176.

¹²⁴ “Causes of the Indian Rebellion,” 15.

¹²⁵ Ireland, 342, n.

¹²⁶ Benjamin Moran, *The Journal of Benjamin Moran*, vol. 1, eds. Sarah Agnes Wallace and Frances Elma Gillespie (Chicago, 1948–49), 102. Huffnagle also referred to crimes against women and children in a letter to Lewis Cass, December 28, 1857, *Papers of the Consuls*.

¹²⁷ “The Condition of India,” *National Era* (Sept. 24, 1857), 154. In many cases, violence was Americans’ only reason for opposing the Indians. This contrasts well with the admiration for Mahatma Gandhi eighty years later, when he emphasized nonviolence in his quest for Indian independence. At that point, it was the Britons’ turn to look like brutes.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Fox-Genovese, 263–65.

the “women and children were treated.”¹²⁹ By 1900, Nana Sahib had become a familiar villain in novels, the “Satanic locus of all oriental treachery, lust, and murder,” and “by far the most familiar Indian character.”¹³⁰

It would be simplistic to read the importance of white women to Westerners—Western men in particular—as strictly affectionate, or even chivalrous. To Britons and Americans, white women’s purity was an important symbol of white male power. Claude Lévi-Strauss has stated that men use women as the verbs by which they communicate with one another, and that rape has been a way for men to communicate defeat to a conquered people.¹³¹ British writers during the Indian Uprising support Lévi-Strauss’s theory. A writer for the *Times* (London)—in an article that appeared in the *Liberator*—interpreted the rebels’ degradation of “women and unmarried girls” in the main thoroughfare of Delhi, in front of thousands of spectators, as having been done “*of settled purpose, to degrade England, to degrade Europe, to degrade a Christian empire and a Christian Queen.*”¹³² And a writer for Britain’s *Economist*—whose article was reprinted in *Littell’s Living Age* (1844–1941) out of Boston—blamed the Indian atrocities on “not lust, but an intellectual desire to revenge the sense of a race’s long subordination.”¹³³

Where crimes against white women were concerned, American compassion

¹²⁹ Chesnut, 409.

¹³⁰ Brantlinger, 204.

¹³¹ Robin Morgan, “Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape,” in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, ed. Laura Lederer (New York, 1980), 140.

¹³² *The Times* (London) quoted in “Horrors of the War in India,” *Liberator* (Sept. 25, 1857), 156. Emphasis in original. Also quoted in “India,” *Littell’s Living Age* (October–December 1857), 187.

¹³³ “The Mind of the Mutiny and Its Present Attitude,” *Littell’s Lvg. Age* (October–December 1857), 438.

for the British in India was closer to empathy than sympathy. While the British exaggerated fears that white women would be the prey of Indian men, American Southerners had an irrational fear that white women would be raped by male slaves. In both British India and the American South, white women were “untouchable property, the ultimate symbol of white male power.”¹³⁴ Nothing was a greater smite to white men than the sully of the women’s purity, especially by a man of another race. As Peter Bardaglio observed in his study of rape cases in the Old South, in cultures that emphasized the purity of white female sexuality, “rape was less the violation of a woman’s autonomous will than the theft of her honor.” Rape dishonored the entire household, especially its male leader. This loss of honor challenged both slavery and the entire social order. For this reason, “Rape or attempted rape of a white woman by a bondsman demanded especially fierce retribution.”¹³⁵

Some Indian men apparently understood the subtext of honor that white women represented and therefore exploited British sensitivities. “I die contented,” an Indian asserted just before being executed, “having seen English ladies molested and torn to pieces in the public bazaar.” He was not the only one to make such a dying declaration.¹³⁶ Such comments were probably lies, as members of a British commission suspected when they sought, unsuccessfully, to relieve British victims of Indian violence. A. M. Cocks, special commissioner at Aligarh after the rebellion,

¹³⁴ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind that Burns in Each Body’: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,” *Southern Exposure* (November/December 1984), 64; British anger described in Broehl, 126.

¹³⁵ Peter W. Bardaglio, “Rape and the Law in the Old South: ‘Calculated to excite indignation in every heart,’” *Journal of Southern History* (November 1994), 754–55.

¹³⁶ Journals of Private Charles Quevillart, Norfolk County Record Office, quoted in Hibbert, 123.

pursued reports of a rebel who, just before being executed, “boasted of having dishonoured an Englishwoman,” but could not verify the incident and was instead assured that nothing of the kind had occurred in that town.¹³⁷

British retribution on Indians in cases of alleged rape closely resembles the lynching of blacks in the American South. As with British suspicions of Indian men, many white Southerners believed that African American men “were obsessed with the desire to rape white women,” and that such violation should be a capital offense.¹³⁸ Although lynchings in America were most frequent in periods of social change—such as Reconstruction—Americans in the 1850s could identify with the British response.¹³⁹ Allegations of rape of white women by nonwhite men, white anxiety due to changing social dynamics, and the solution of vigilante execution all appear in the American South around this time. In 1855, citizens of Sumter County, Alabama, took a black prisoner from his cell, “chained him to a stake” at the spot where he had allegedly raped and murdered a white girl, and burned him alive, rather than allow the trial to be moved to another county. In White County, Tennessee, in 1858, people broke into the jail and accosted a slave who had been charged with rape and murder and hanged him.¹⁴⁰

There are also contemporary examples of vigilantism in times of turmoil in the United States. In 1858, in the wake of the Third Seminole War, Tampa, Florida, “was

¹³⁷ Sir John Kaye’s Mutiny Papers, India Office Library, 725, quoted in Hibbert, 213.

¹³⁸ Bardaglio, 752–53.

¹³⁹ Hall, 67.

¹⁴⁰ *Southern Banner*, Athens, Ga. (June 21, 1855), quoted in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime* (Baton Rouge, 1966; orig. pub. New York, 1918), 462–63; Head’s *Tennessee Reports*, 1: 336, quoted in Phillips, 463.

infested with gamblers, ... burglars, thieves, robbers, and cut throats." Tampan lynched two suspected horse thieves; an anonymous writer explained to the *Tampa Florida Peninsular* that the law "too often permitted guilty persons to go unpunished, and, therefore, justice required vigilante action."¹⁴¹ Two years later, Tampan "Regulators" lynched a slave convicted of murder when the Florida Supreme Court temporarily blocked the carrying out of the death sentence. The *Peninsular's* editor approved of the vigilante justice. Differentiating between "a mob" and "mature deliberation by the citizens," he insisted that even "in the best regulated state of society," there would be "circumstances calling forth the *ultima ratio populi*."¹⁴²

Also, rape laws in both colonial Asia and the Old South were "race specific," with nonwhite male assault on white women being the only permutation of concern. In colonial Asia, no other configuration aroused much animosity and some—such as white male assault on black women—were not even illegal. Similarly, in the Old South, rape laws and antimiscegenation laws reflected legislators' and judges' interest in "preventing sexual relations between white women and black men, as well as keeping those two groups in their appropriate places in the social order." Antebellum

¹⁴¹ Tampa *Florida Peninsular* (May 1, 1858), quoted in Robert P. Ingalls, "Lynching and Establishment Violence in Tampa, 1858–1935," *Journal of Southern History* (November 1987), 616.

¹⁴² Tampa *Florida Peninsular* (Jan. 21, 1860), quoted in Ingalls, 615–16. Political scientists H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederberg refer to vigilante activity such as lynching as "establishment violence," which they define as "the use of violence by established groups to preserve the status quo at times when the formal system of rule enforcement is viewed as ineffective or irrelevant." Their observation dovetails with Ann Laura Stoler's assertion that concern with protecting white women "intensified during real and perceived crises of control." That is, loss of social control has repeatedly inspired white men both to become more protective of white women and to use violence to protect them (Rosenbaum and Sederberg, "Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence," in *Vigilante Politics*, ed. Rosenbaum and Sederberg [Philadelphia, 1976], 17, also quoted in Ingalls, 614; Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia," in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo [Berkeley, 1991], 68).

appellate courts overturned convictions if there was no proof of a woman's race, because "the sexual violation of a black woman was usually not a crime."¹⁴³

Whites in both India and the American South feared sexual and racial transgressions even when such incidents were rare. In both places, too, those who recounted the tales mythologized the man and woman; the rapist became a "monstrous beast, crazed with lust," while the white victim became young, blonde, and virginal. And in both India and the American South, their Anglo-Saxon avengers believed that "only swift, sure violence ... could protect white women from sexual assault."¹⁴⁴ These exaggerations accompanied sensationalizing of the few cases that did occur. Rapes or attempted rapes of white women by black men occurred rarely in the Old South, but "white fear of black sexual assault guaranteed that legal authorities would vigorously prosecute" any black men who were accused of the crime.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the few rapes or attempted rapes that did occur were widely publicized, "far out of proportion to their statistical significance," and Anglo-Indians continued to believe that Indians must have raped British women, despite the absence of evidence, thus masking the largely mythical nature of the "black rapist."¹⁴⁶

While reports of Indian attacks on white women appeared to threaten the social order from below, bad British behavior threatened it from above, by challenging many white Americans' image of their race as exceptionally benevolent

¹⁴³ Stoler, 68; Bardaglio, 750, 764.

¹⁴⁴ Hall, 64; Stoler, 69.

¹⁴⁵ Bardaglio, 760.

¹⁴⁶ Hall, 64; Andrew Ward, *Our Bones Are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacre and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (New York, 1996), 506–10.

and merciful. Americans who were close to the fighting may have been inclined to side with the British, but accounts of British cruelty horrified many Americans at home who acknowledged that such behavior would hinder, rather than advance, the spread of Christianity. American Consul Charles Huffnagle believed that “a war of extermination *must* follow” atrocities such as “English ladies hanging naked by their hair from the ceilings while the miscreants tore off their flesh piecemeal,—or suspended by their hands, or feet & treated in the same way until death relieved them.”¹⁴⁷ But Huffnagle’s proximity to the fighting—and the fact that he made his comment before reports of British atrocities had become known—help explain his sentiment. Back in the United States, while a writer for *The Friend* admitted that Indian “atrocities” were “heart-sickening,” he considered them “no more so, than some of the acts of retaliation authorized ... by their conquerors, professing to be the disciples of the Prince of Peace.”¹⁴⁸ The *Advocate of Peace* described how the British executed Indian mutineers by strapping them to cannons and then setting off the cannons. Ten condemned men were

fastened to the guns. The port-fires were lit, the order to fire given, and the wretches were blown to atoms. The scene and the stench were overpowering. All the natives were paralyzed with fear; they changed into unnatural hues, and trembled like aspen leaves.¹⁴⁹

In this article, the *Advocate of Peace* also quoted Sir Charles Napier’s assertion that “*not another human being should live [in any revolted towns] if we had the power of*

¹⁴⁷ Bhagat, 117, 97; Huffnagle to Marcy, June 29, 1857; Huffnagle to Lewis Cass, Washington, D. C., Dec. 28, 1857, Papers of the Consuls.

¹⁴⁸ [Untitled editorial], *Friend* (Oct. 31, 1857), 63.

¹⁴⁹ “British Retaliation in India,” 22. This account was also quoted in “Letter from India,” *Independent* (Oct. 10, 1857), 2.

putting them to death” and his insistence that not “one [Hindu] should be saved.”

“Such is the preparation,” the *Advocate of Peace* cynically remarked, “which the sword makes for the spread of Christianity.”¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, a writer for the *North American Review* observed that Britons used the Kanpur episode to justify blowing Indians from guns, but that such executions predated the massacre at Kanpur.¹⁵¹

And Americans soon had more reason to fear that British behavior was ignoble. Early in 1858, the British government sent a committee to India to relieve British victims of the turmoil, and for six weeks the committee members traced tales of horror that had reached Great Britain, so that they could assist their beleaguered countrymen. Upon their return, they reported their findings to Member of Parliament Henry Rich. On March 18, 1858, Rich announced to the House of Commons that, although he detested the insurgents’ “atrocious crimes,” he feared that Britons in India were not above reproach. To a large extent, British vengeance had resulted from Britons’ false stories of Indian crimes. The committee members did not doubt that atrocities “may have occurred,” he announced, but they had been unable to verify “a single case.”¹⁵² Rich went on to say that he could excuse crimes committed by Anglo-Indians who found themselves “beset by treachery and murder” and who therefore were defending “themselves and everything dear to them” but could not excuse those who gave “currency, on the platform and in the press, to extravagant tales of horror”—including tales “of ladies and children, violated and mutilated”—“for which

¹⁵⁰ “British Retaliation in India,” 22, 24.

¹⁵¹ “The Rebellion in India,” 493.

¹⁵² *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, vol. CXLIX, 2d vol. of sess., 347.

they had no honest authority.”¹⁵³

Rich expressed hope that stories of British retaliatory atrocities were also exaggerated and encouraged attention to the Indians’ side of the story, because “justice, enlightened by facts and a due discrimination of guilt, ... characterized civilized men.” In his statements in Parliament, Henry Rich admitted his belief that British mismanagement may have warranted the sepoys’ rebellious spirit.¹⁵⁴ The next day, the *Times* in London reported Rich’s comments; copies of that issue were put aboard the ship *America*, which left Liverpool on April 9 and arrived at Halifax, Nova Scotia, four days later.

American reactions to Rich’s comments tended to correlate with their sympathies beforehand. A writer for the pro-British American journal *Albion* excused Anglo-Indians’ false reports of Indian crimes, as they were fighting for “life and honour and what is far dearer ... their wives, and their families”—but he did not encourage similar lenience for sepoys.¹⁵⁵ Americans who had questioned the British role in India unleashed their anger. A *Christian Examiner* writer wrote “God forbid” that they should “give way to that thirst for vengeance, ... which is now said ... to fill the heart of every Englishman in India.”¹⁵⁶ And writers for the *Advocate of Peace* condemned British vengeance, such as soldiers’ “outburst of complaints” when their leader forbade them to burn villages, and the British cry “WE MUST HAVE BLOOD ...

¹⁵³ Ibid., 346–47.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 348.

¹⁵⁵ “Alleged Inhumanity of the British in India,” *Albion* (April 10, 1858), 175.

¹⁵⁶ “The Hindoos,” 173.

our men are MAD for revenge."¹⁵⁷

Others were bothered that the British had degraded themselves by behaving in such an unchristian fashion. An *Atlantic Monthly* writer asserted that "The strength of English rule ... must be in her justice" and feared that revenge would "bring the English conquerors down to the level of the conquered."¹⁵⁸ A writer for the *Liberator* reported that there were "no cases of rape or mutilation" and that the British had "no prisoners of war," all of them "being regularly murdered." He found it difficult to excuse British cruelty because it was "practised by a professedly *Christian* nation upon those whom they regard as ignorant and uncivilized" and concluded that "words are powerless to express the loathing and scorn which such preëminent villainy deserves."¹⁵⁹ And a writer for the *North American Review* insisted that "he would be hopelessly stupid indeed" who could not see the reason behind even the "most revolting scenes" of Indian rebellion. Although it was easier to understand the British perspective, because "We cannot hear [the Indians'] voice, in a strange language, over the broad ocean," the writer admitted that Americans and Britons' largely shared heritage made them eager for the British to mend their ways, "for the credit of Christianity and of our civilization."¹⁶⁰

The rebellion was the end of rule in India for the East India Company. Although it had not worked hard "for the credit of Christianity and of our

¹⁵⁷ "British Retaliation in India," 21, 22.

¹⁵⁸ "The Indian Revolt," *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1857), 222, 222 n.

¹⁵⁹ M., "British Falsehoods Concerning the Atrocities in India," *Liberator* (April 16, 1858), 62.

¹⁶⁰ "The Rebellion in India," 491, 493.

civilization,” many Americans appreciated its financial accomplishments. American Minister to England George Dallas was dazzled that the “extraordinary” Company, which “had begun as a few enterprising merchants,” had grown into “a magnificent empire teeming with wealth of every description, and with a population six times as large as that of Great Britain.”¹⁶¹ An *Atlantic Monthly* writer insisted that there had been “nothing like the rule of the English in India to be found in history” and noted that the Company had controlled more people than had the Roman empire.¹⁶² A writer for *Bankers’ Magazine* insisted that “it is almost impossible to conceive the vast extent of commercial operations and the almost limitless field of enterprise of which that colossal monopoly, the East India Company, is the soul and centre.”¹⁶³ Even publications that were inclined to defend Indians admired the Company. An editorial in the *Friend* admitted that “The history of the East India Company is, we apprehend, without a parallel,” and a writer for the *Christian Examiner* considered India to be “the grandest foreign dependency the world has ever seen.”¹⁶⁴

And when control of India passed from the Company to the Crown, still more Americans paid tribute. A writer for *Godey’s Lady’s Book* deemed Britain’s empire in India “glorious.”¹⁶⁵ *Graham’s Illustrated Magazine*, in Philadelphia, reported that “No romance could be conceived more full of exciting interest than the simple

¹⁶¹ Dallas, Feb. 12, 1858, 238.

¹⁶² “British India,” *Atl. Mthly.* (November 1857), 86.

¹⁶³ “Foreign Banks and Currency: British East Indies,” *Bankers’ Magazine* (August 1857), 106.

¹⁶⁴ [Untitled editorial], *Friend* (Oct. 31, 1857), 63; “The Revolt and the English,” 107, 108, 122, 123.

¹⁶⁵ “Literary Notices,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (November 1858), 469.

narrative of the progress of the East India Company.”¹⁶⁶ And writers for New York’s *Knickerbocker* (1833–1865) noted *Punch*’s uncomplimentary obituary of the Company and admitted, “we can hardly find it in our hearts to rejoice over its grave,” instead recalling its members’ “heroism, and genius, and sacrifice.”¹⁶⁷

But while Americans applauded the Company’s accomplishments, they did not necessarily shed tears for its demise. The *Knickerbocker* writers deemed the Company’s work in India “a grand monument of middle-class energy and enterprise,” but they admitted that it was probably a “blessing for the race whose fate it so long held in its hands, that it is gone.”¹⁶⁸ During the conflict, writers at *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* attributed India’s “trouble and bloodshed” to Company rule and asserted that the East India Company was one of “two great monopolies in England which will have to be done away with.”¹⁶⁹ When its rule did end, *Hunt*’s staff acknowledged their admiration for the Company’s accomplishments but quoted the noncommittal observation in the *Times* (London) that “For good or evil, a power has passed away from the earth.”¹⁷⁰

Despite widespread head-shaking about the Company’s governance, which emphasized accumulating wealth over “uplifting” Indians, even Americans who were critical of British rule largely supported British attempts to reassert control in the subcontinent—with the assumption that the British would learn from their mistakes.

¹⁶⁶ “The New Museum at the India House,” *Graham’s Illus. Mag.* (October 1858), 358.

¹⁶⁷ “The Death of a Great Power,” *Knickerbocker* [New York] (December 1858), 615.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 617, 615.

¹⁶⁹ “British Monopolies,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (November 1857), 561.

¹⁷⁰ “End of the British East India Company,” 394.

Writers for the *Knickerbocker* believed that the Company had not “governed India as well as it might have been governed” but also insisted that it had provided “the best government India has ever had.”¹⁷¹ The *Church Review* quoted the Bishop of Calcutta, who admitted that “We have a hundred years of offenses to answer for” but hoped that the war would prompt the British to “offer free toleration to the religion of the Cross.”¹⁷² And a writer for the *Washington Union*, a publication that enjoyed a close relationship with the Buchanan administration, observed that statistics on how India was faring under British rule were “far from showing such results as might be expected.” He also acknowledged that there was widespread support for the rebels and denied that British rule was necessary for Indians to “make any progress in arts, civilization, and commerce.” Yet he supported continued British control, explaining that Great Britain had “done so much for India,” and he believed that rebellious sentiment could be “crushed” if the British pursued “a more enlightened policy” to correct “the evils of past misgovernment.”¹⁷³

Americans who supported British reassertion of control in India largely did so because they believed that even flawed British governance was preferable to Indian self-rule. Although the *Princeton Review* admitted that India’s British rulers had committed “many mistakes and many crimes,” another article in the publication asserted that among Indians “There is neither virtue nor intelligence among them for self-government.”¹⁷⁴ A writer for Washington, D. C.’s *National Intelligencer* insisted

¹⁷¹ “The Death of a Great Power,” *Knickerbocker* (December 1858), 620.

¹⁷² Quoted in “Religious Aspect of the Mutiny in India,” 626, 627.

¹⁷³ “Trade and Production of British India,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (January 1858), 95–96.

¹⁷⁴ “The Present State of India,” 454; “The Revolt of the Sepoys,” 42.

that “the presence of Europeans in sufficient numbers gives the only guarantee for common right and justice.”¹⁷⁵ And even a writer for the *Christian Examiner*, a publication that was often sympathetic to Indians, maintained that Hindus had shown “little wisdom in organizing and maintaining imperial and central governments” and deemed the British to have provided India with “the best government they have ever had.”¹⁷⁶

Americans’ support for the British presence in India—despite their criticism of the Company’s governance—indicates how ardently they believed in the superiority of Western rule. And Americans had greater faith still in the goodness of their own commercial expansion, which they saw as accompanied by nobler pursuits. A writer for *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* deemed commerce “a sordid and groveling pursuit” when motivated by “selfishness.” But he considered its true nature to be as “a vast humanizing and beneficent system, that is competent to diffuse the blessings of civilization throughout the world.” America’s “divines, our statesmen, and our philosophers,” he insisted, “look upon commerce as a handmaid of religion, of civilization, of philanthropy, of the arts, and of every good influence.” He blamed commerce’s bad reputation on governments’ “oppressive restrictions” by which they took the “largest share of gains” for themselves. With those bonds “loosened,” he envisioned, “The interests of nations will be cemented together by the bonds of trade.

¹⁷⁵ “The Results and Prospects of Missionary Labor in India,” *Nat’l Intelligencer* (July 2, 1857), 2.

¹⁷⁶ “The Hindoos,” 207, 175.

Then white robed peace will smile over all lands.”¹⁷⁷ William B. Reed agreed.

Missionizing, “in its true and harmonizing power, and in its increasing influence on commercial adventure,” he insisted, “is, under Providence, the great agent of civilization.”¹⁷⁸ In another *Hunt’s* article, a writer for the publication advocated actual colonizing. “One small island in the seas, or one small colony abroad,” he suggested, “would create more trade and business than fifty times the same extent at home.”

South America, he believed, should become “an *East Indies to the United States*.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ “The Peaceful and Civilizing Mission of Commerce,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (April 1859), 518–19.

¹⁷⁸ “American Missionaries and Thanksgiving Day,” 178.

¹⁷⁹ “An East Indies to the United States,” *Hunt’s Merch. Mag.* (November 1858), 569, 571.

CONCLUSION

Updates on the British empire, in all its glory and all its grief, appeared in American publications throughout the Middle Period, and events within the empire encouraged a variety of lengthy responses. Many Americans admired the British empire's control of territory and population, its ability to generate wealth and create new markets, and its potential to spread Protestant Christianity. Still others admired the empire's ability to provide an outlet for excess British population. But few Americans saw the British empire as a perfectly operating system. They knew that British expansion brought diseases that decimated native populations. The empire appeared overextended, and its costs forced the British to neglect domestic concerns. Poor governance led to native rebellion. Rulers put profits ahead of humanitarian concerns and forced a government to accept debilitating drugs in order to maintain those profits. Repeatedly, involvement with natives—whether living among them in peace or fighting them in war—threatened to reveal the imperialists as more savage than their subjects.

The British empire's potential for both development and destruction gave Americans a great deal of leverage as to how they would perceive imperialism. They could accept imperial problems as God's will, and see even the grimmest aspects of imperialism as providential. Or they could question updates written from a pro-British perspective and opt for accounts of imperial happenings from Irish, French, or British working-class papers that were not favorably disposed to the empire.

Americans did not all reach the same conclusions. One can partly understand their different perspectives by looking at their domestic concerns. These concerns were varied, and in this era, the splintering of society was becoming even more acute. Policymakers tended to support imperialism in theory, and they also supported the notion of an American mission. Working-class sources were more skeptical of imperialism. The responses from different denominations reflected different church doctrine. While farmers were eager to learn new agricultural techniques as a result of the opening of China, missionaries were excited at the potential for new converts. While expansionists insisted that an American presence was crucial in Nicaragua, peace advocates focused on the empire's violent excesses there and elsewhere. While British encroachment in South Africa inspired fear that Africans would meet the same fate as American Indians, the Indian Uprising seemed akin to a slave rebellion. Because domestic issues played such a strong role in attitudes toward imperialism, it makes sense that Americans were more unified in their opposition to the British presence in Nicaragua than anywhere else, because that situation most closely affected America domestically.

The increasing role of the United States government in this period also demonstrates the degree to which self-interest was a motivating force. Americans persistently criticized the British empire as overly bureaucratic and suggested that merchants should be given freer reign. But through this era American merchants repeatedly clamored for increased government protection of their employees and their trade, issuing memorials regarding perils in Hawaii and China, and they also

demonstrated interest in the government ensuring that the United States would control an isthmian transit route. They were livid when the United States signed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty with Great Britain, because it allowed the British to maintain their protectorate over the Mosquito Coast while preventing the United States from constructing an isthmian canal without British approval. By 1860, Americans would be much more likely to pursue their work overseas under the protection of government representatives and commercial treaties.

Britons' and Americans' similar commercial goals made them each other's greatest competitor. For this reason, American opposition to British imperialism, rather than indicating an opposition to imperialism per se, often indicated the strength of Americans' own imperial ambitions. An American could, therefore, strongly oppose British imperialism and yet strongly support his or her own brand of imperialism.

Nationality played little role in American attitudes toward British imperialism. Many Americans respected Chinese and Indian cultures, but they do not appear to have accepted British imperialism more in Hawaii and Africa, where the people were less revered. One could reasonably have predicted that Americans would have supported the British most in South Africa, as the colony lacked the financial incentives to become a setting for British greed, the British presence emphasized mission work and establishing order, and Africans were held in the lowest regard of all the native populations in this study. Yet American opposition to British incursions in Africa was on par with American reactions to other episodes.

There also seems to have been little change over time. Rather than American support for British imperialism waxing or waning over this period, the one important aspect of the time appears to be its correlation with domestic events. Although several Americans compared imperialism with the fate of American Indians, such comments were most prominent when reacting to the situation in South Africa, which happened soon after Indians were moved westward in the 1830s Trail of Tears. And while many Americans compared slavery with imperialism, such comparisons were most prominent during the Indian Uprising, on the eve of the Civil War.

Some Americans were optimistic about their own empire, despite all of Britain's problems, because the United States lacked holdings comparable to those of the British. Because they could only speak of their empire theoretically, who was to say that they would not learn from British mistakes and create a truly benevolent empire? American empire would emphasize moral uplift, include just enough government involvement to protect American trade and American citizens, and would sidestep needless costs and native unrest by being commercial and informal rather than territorial in nature. To a large extent, manifest destiny epitomized this vision of expansion that included all the advantages of the British empire and none of its headaches. Manifest destiny put expansion on a more noble footing, by emphasizing uplift and the spread of Christianity over financial gain. While Americans criticized British greed and exploitation in their empire, they praised efforts to uplift or Christianize those under their sway—the manifest destiny ideal.

Many Americans, however, appreciated that the British were creating a world

that was receptive to Western presence and products. They made routes safe from natives, laid roads, and provided opportunities for Western missionaries to meet with native populations. And although Americans may have opposed the means by which the British brought such conditions about, they were glad that the goals were achieved.

These findings demonstrate the importance of considering all of American society when studying American foreign relations. Incorporating American culture and society into this study of American empire was necessary to reveal important motivations that determined American attitudes toward empire. Attention to race, class, religion, and gender also helps provide an understanding of the mindset of policymakers. These cultural notions affected American opinions of imperialism as strongly as did notions of national interest.

Discussion of empire pervaded antebellum America to a surprising degree. Missionaries, policymakers, and entrepreneurs who were looking abroad had opinions about imperialism, but so did New York theatergoers, genteel Southern ladies, physicians in Kentucky, and New England's working class. And unlike twentieth-century Americans—stewards of the empire that dares not speak its name—antebellum Americans broadcast their opinions of imperialism without reservation. Some historians have assumed that nineteenth-century Americans opposed empire. The dominant sentiment at the time, however, was celebration of empire's potential—that Great Britain's was good, and that America's would be great. Resistance to empire existed, but its voices were often muted.

Although it is beyond the scope of this project, Britons were not necessarily any more unified in their opinions toward empire than were Americans. As has been mentioned, Americans who opposed empire quoted British working-class newspapers in their accounts, just one of many signs of British disillusion with their nation's overseas holdings.

This study may focus too early in the nineteenth century to address the hesitancy that historians suggest characterized 1890s imperialism, but some conjectures are possible. Antebellum Americans' comments about empire lack the reluctance or coyness that has come to be identified with American imperialism. Many Americans predicted that their empire would be purer and more benevolent than its British counterpart and saw such expansion as providential. Rather than being reluctant or accidental imperialists, they appear to have eagerly anticipated their nation's increasing prominence on the world stage. These findings bear out the assertion of Richard Van Alstyne that Americans became chary of speaking of empire only after the Civil War. The difference between the British justifying empire and Americans denying it, therefore, could reflect the nations' timing more than a difference in ideology. Both nations had their share of anti-imperialists, but the British empire was centuries old—those who could be blamed for its creation were long dead. Architects of a new American empire, however, would be alive to bear the criticism. Therefore, it would have been in their best interests to make such acquisition appear unintentional, to avoid anti-imperial ire while still achieving their overseas goals.

“How are future acquisitions to be effected?” former New York Governor William Henry Seward asked in 1845’s *Elements of Empire in America*. “By conquest? Not at all. The United States have discovered, what it is strange was not known before, that PEACE is more propitious to the ruling passion of empire than WAR; and that provinces are more cheaply *bought* than *conquered*.”

“What Great Britain has expended to support armies and navies in the last century,” he chided, “would have been sufficient to purchase her eastern dominions.”¹

Many Americans at the time agreed with Seward. The *Advocate of Peace* saw fit to reprint this portion of Seward’s address, believing that this expansion was conducive to peace. Optimism about American empire was not limited to imperialism’s most earnest advocates. And after the Civil War, Secretary of State Seward would usher in the era in which the United States would acquire an overseas empire of its own, an empire both bought and conquered.

¹ Quoted in “Notices of Publications,” *Advocate of Peace* (January 1845), 9, 8.

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Boston Evening Transcript

Boston Recorder

Brownson's Quarterly Review

Catholic Telegraph

Christian Examiner

Christian Register

Christian Secretary

Christian Spectator

Christian Watchman [& Christian Reflector]

Church Review

Columbus [Georgia] Enquirer

De Bow's [Commercial] Review

Emancipator

Free Enquirer

Friend
Godey's Lady's Book
Graham's Illustrated Magazine
Harbinger
Harper's Weekly
Hunt's Merchants' Magazine
Independent
International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Science
Knickerbocker
Ladies' Repository
Liberator
Littell's Living Age
 [London] *Quarterly Review*
Lowell Offering
Missionary Herald [at Home]
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